Challenging animal-based food systems: Citizen Surgery on vegan body simulators

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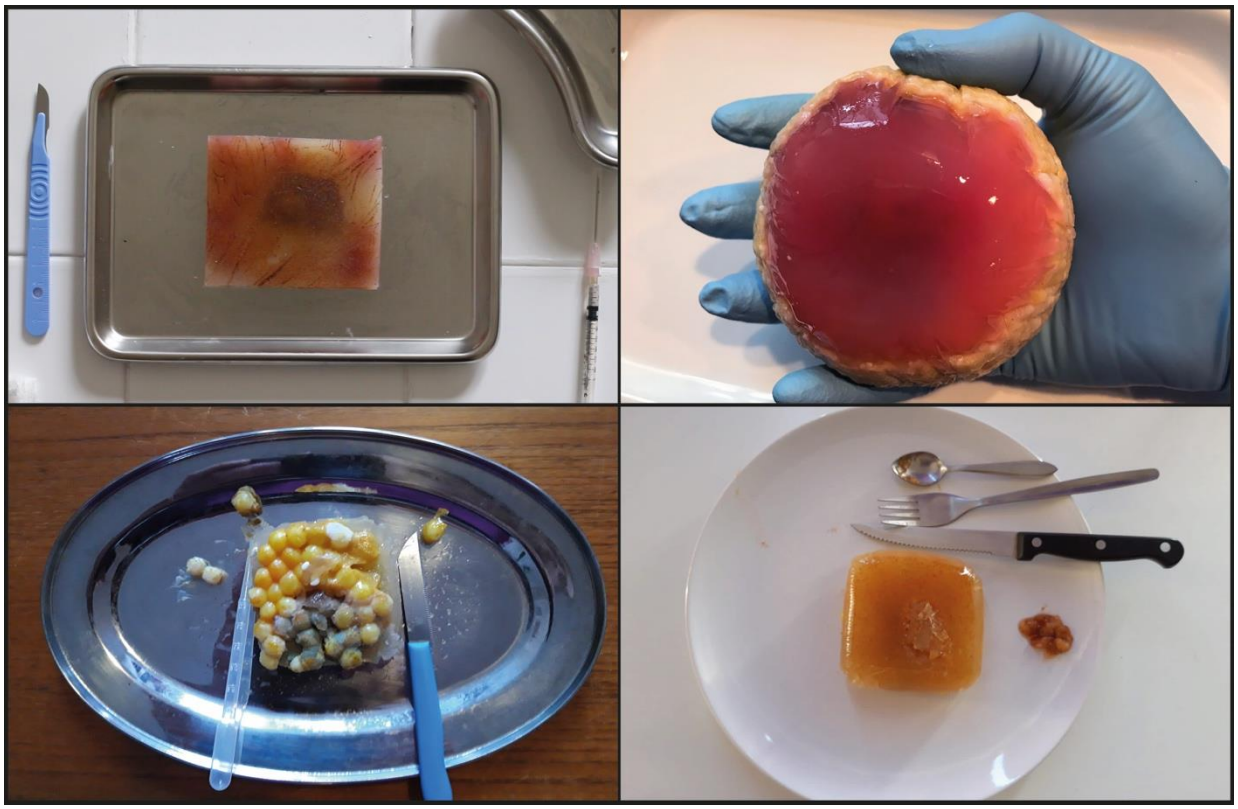

Image 1. Koski, K., Soula, N., van Veen, A./Citizen Surgery Collective. (2021). *Lunchtime Surgery Class.*

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the voices of resistance emerging in the work of the Citizen Surgery Collective, an interdisciplinary practice-based research group I initiated in 2020. The collective consists of artists, critical posthumanists, anthropologists, and activists in the UK and the Netherlands. I have previously defined citizen surgery to encompass various forms of surgical simulation conducted by individuals untrained in surgery in different contexts, such as art, education, ASMR, and children's play (Koski, 2021). As a genre of citizen surgery, the collaborative work discussed in this text concerns the relationship between (non)human animal bodies and food, specifically through surgical simulation and sensory skills acquisition. These practices are geared toward multispecies justice, and they form a serial inquiry into ways of challenging animal-based food systems and triggering meat-related cognitive dissonance. Reversely, they investigate ways to train surgical skills with food and by eating instead of using live or dead animal models. Our collective practices re-enact surgical choreographies and dialogue to analyze both the materiality and connotations of the food/body intersection and the process of these becoming one through blurred interspecies boundaries.

Interrogating meat-eating and promoting veganism through surgery simulation may initially seem bizarre. However, when considering the multiple entanglements between cultural representations of the female body and meat and how intertwined the (male) traditions of surgery and butchery historically have been (Adams, 1990; Cudworth, 2010), it becomes evident how deeply rooted interconnectedness there exists between the human/nonhuman bodies, eating, and body fragmentation by knife-bound practices. Adding to these is the fact that many citizen surgery practices appear in the form of tutorials and trainings and thus promote an

emancipatory DIY attitude and identity-claiming (Koski, 2021) within previously exclusive and hierarchical systems.

The Citizen Surgery Collective can be considered anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist in two intertwined ways: our practice refuses meat as multispecies injustice and is conducted by an all-female surgery team in slow, wondering, low-budget and domestic inquiries. While the collective was not set up as a feminist group as such, it is impossible to comprehensively discuss the practices without addressing the dimensions of gender and sexuality. Accordingly, the refusal of meat should be seen here as a resistance to patriarchy. Our work explores Carol Adam's (1990) influential thesis on the sexual politics of meat, which poignantly articulates the cultural mythologies associated with meat as masculine food and meat eating a male activity, as these have skewed the power relations associated with gender and species. In these distorted cultural narratives, women are seen as second-class citizens, and they are more likely to eat what are considered to be second-class foods in a patriarchal culture: vegetables, fruits, and grains rather than meat (ibid.). To counter these denigrating attitudes toward nonhuman life and female nutrition, the Citizen Surgery Collective practices appear purposefully unheimlich and monstrous. The four women here create human body parts from the dough and other edible vegan substances (potential for Frankenstein), subsequently dissecting the body and eating it as a meal. On the one hand, our work did emerge in a vacuum; most of the practices discussed in this text took place under very unusual and isolated circumstances: women (and cats) gathering online during the pandemic and engaging in improvisatory and open-ended inquiries with food. On the other hand, however, these practices expand beyond a particular moment in time and space; the lens introduced in this exposition draws from the collective cultural female lineage, the intellectual, caring, creative, and liberative consciousnesses that pre-existed in cooking, needling, witchcraft medicine, curiosity and fear of surgical interventions, and resistance of (non)human animal suffering and death. As a creative practice, our work connects to a domain of practices that ask how visual culture and fine art can promote veganism, believing that the portrayal of (simulated) meat and (dead) animals can have significant aesthetic, moral, and social value (Marcus, 2018).

As our collective emerged in the pre-pandemic and early pandemic era, there were limited opportunities to engage with the audience (nor did we have anything to show for a while). This allowed us a few years of concentrated time to familiarize ourselves with each other's specialisms and ways of working and develop our collaborative aesthetics, language, and methods. To date, we have created multiple films and conducted several performative in-person workshops and online performances in different combinations of our collective members. The audiences have consisted of academic peers, graduate students of various disciplines, clinical teachers, and general art audiences. Our films are being screened at scholarly conferences, (art and) science film festivals, and gallery shows. While the workshops could be tailor-made for specific audiences such as medical students, from the vegan promotion viewpoint prioritizing the everyday politics of eating practices makes all of us stakeholders to be addressed. While women's status is in many countries and behind many closed doors similar to that of a nonhuman animal, it is important to acknowledge that our collective represents a privileged white voice of the Global North, having the socio-economical position that allows to opt out from meat eating. Personally, this privilege amplifies the responsibility to use the voice to question the injustice associated with nonhuman animal suffering and death.

Image 2. (CW) Soula, N., Koski, K., Harris, A., van Veen, A. (2021). *Citizen Surgery Collective.*

The exposition doesn't follow a structure of a research paper, nor does it describe a specific artwork or a process. Instead, it is explicating the theoretical-activistic underpinnings behind our ongoing practice-based research. Research here should be understood as a durational material and theoretical commitment to explore new avenues for body simulation and promotion of veganism, and simultaneously, an artistic-activistic vision to unite the artificially differentiated bodies of human and nonhuman animals by uniting the practices of surgery and cooking/eating. The collective wasn't set up with specific research questions in mind, but our collaboration has generated multiple questions, connections, and provocations through material-led improvisation and recipe-making. Regarding the practices discussed here, the inquiries especially concern 1. Materiality and ethics of edible body simulation, 2. Stimulation of cognitive dissonance as an artistic-activistic strategy, and 3. Role of language in the sensory experience of (meat) eating. Indirectly we also dissect surgical language and choreography and advance educational research on how to share sensory knowledge and skills. Finally, our research asks how the ambiguous surgical-culinary methods and associated meanings might promote veganism, and more generally, what can art and artists do to expand and deepen the other forms of animal rights activism.

The title of this article borrows from a group of leading vegan studies scholars (Morris et al., 2021) urging to address the challenges in and moving beyond animal-based food systems. As a response, the exposition discusses Citizen Surgery Collective practices as they specifically focus on two pressing areas of injustice: framing animals as food and the relationship between eating practices and identities. Conceptually the exposition draws from Feminist Animal Studies and Vegan Studies and integrates these into practices of bioart, performance art, and moving image. In bringing these views and practices together to challenge animal-based food systems, the exposition highlights explicitly two of our films, *Lunchtime Surgery Class* (Koski et al., 2022) and *DermaBread* (Koski, 2022), and three performances; *Clinical Dinner* (Harris et al., 2021), *DermaBread Tutorial* (Koski & Soula 2021), and *BoneCracker* (Koski et al., 2023). Instead of describing each work in detail, I discuss Citizen Surgery Collective as an ongoing practice and body of work. Aspects of the individual works are weaved in and highlighted throughout the thematically structured exposition. They are also represented through film excerpts and still images to gain impressions of their performative, material, and political dimensions. I will begin by discussing specific eating practices and theoretical dispositions, backgrounding, and embedded in our work. This is followed by reflections on our particular

artistic methods of resistance through performance, edible installations, and cinematic compositions. I will then discuss further meanings arising from these methods and output, focusing on two aspects in particular, *Language of (Non)Violence* and *Food as the Body*, finally arriving at a discussion about the potential of art in promoting multispecies justice and veganism.

ALTERNATIVE EATING PRACTICES: VEGANISM AND CANNIBALISM

The artificial dichotomy between human and nonhuman animals causes disproportionate and unnecessary nonhuman animal suffering and death, and animal-based foods have high social and climate costs (Errickson et al., 2021). Given such well-known and vast destructive implications, one could say that psychologically seen, maintaining an omnivore lifestyle thus requires strategies to avoid moral or even spiritual injury to an individual. Often such injuries are circumvented by the human capacity to avoid or ignore unpleasant internal feelings, thoughts, and emotions. Western culture, in particular, has an ambivalent relation to animals, and a state of mind that occurs when an individual's attitudes and behavior diverge is often referred to as a "cognitive dissonance" (Thelander, 2018). The cognitive dissonance theory has been widely applied to the so-called "meat paradox," which means the internal conflict meat eaters encounter due to the gap between their affection toward animals and their contradicting eating behavior (Rothgerber, 2020).

Unfortunately, the human ability to circumvent cognitive dissonance is not the only factor standing in the way of transitioning to a vegan diet and solving many urgent problems on a global scale in doing so. Namely, attitudes toward veganism are also tensional, and there appear to be dissonant voices even within the vegan community and scholars. While there is not just one way of eating meat, considering various cultural contexts, for instance, there also isn't a single way or motivation to practice veganism. White (2018) makes a distinction between "marketized" and "activist" expressions of veganism, according to which the former is an assumedly individualistic and market-oriented mode of ethical consumerism and thus less appreciated in the context of feminist and animal studies. To overcome such tensions, Giraud and White (2022) call forth a more expansive understanding of veganism, collective and context-specific forms of vegan praxis with the power to instigate complex conversations about realizing multispecies justice. Citizen Surgery Collective holds a vegan praxis as an artistic-scholarly-activistic participatory practice. However, instead of being well-articulated and meticulous, our practices are in many ways messy and "impure" (ibid.), imbued with open-endedness and humor (as opposed to a battle and take-home messages, for instance). Impurity here refers to the impossibility of living without causing harm, even when merely thinking of stepping on insects while walking. Developing an aura of faultlessness and rigidity is also unlikely to help create social change. This aligns with the view of veganism situating between two opposing but necessary poles: utopianism and insufficiency (Quinn & Westwood, 2018). Indeed, ideally and hypothetically, utopianism keeps one motivated and imaginative, and the inevitable feeling of insufficiency preserves humbleness and compassion.

Embracing the inherent impurity and insufficiency in our work has multiple benefits. For example, it allows polyphony amongst the collective members: not all of us are vegan, for instance, making the group conversations more diverse and helping to maintain openness to omnivore participants as well. As a backstory, I had invited the members initially based on their previous work in sensory and material surgical simulation and our existing peer relationships. Artistically seen, these individual dietary sensibilities weave into the collective work; the vegan members of the collective only want to work with vegan ingredients as a principle. While it would be easier to use non-vegan products such as gelatin to achieve a particular texture and viscosity, for instance, the non-vegan members embrace the material exploration the exclusion of animal products invites us to. Given the sensitivities associated with addressing individual eating patterns in any way, the projected attitudes of impurity and insufficiency of the performers can be valuable avenues for dialogue. For most audiences, vegan self-righteousness would be a turn-off. Similarly, exposing the participant to explicitly confronting imageries of slaughtering, for instance, would unlikely motivate people to change their behavior (otherwise, they would be already vegan) but cause them to shut down and withdraw. As Morton (2021) notes, we don't need more trauma porn. Our aim is thus not to cause moral injury to omnivores and leave them

to “deal with it.” While we do stimulate an experience of cognitive dissonance, we also invite the participant into our world by absurdism and playfulness and by offering them the emancipatory potential through skills acquisition. Basically, we are creating a utopian microcosm of curiosity and awe and a collective vibe within which the participant *wants* to join.

VIDEO 1. Citizen Surgery Research Kitchen. (2021).
https://vimeo.com/655366905/8c94881468

If there are tensions amongst vegans, socio-cultural barriers also exist to non-vegans seeing veganism as activism toward multispecies justice. Instead, it is easy to dismiss veganism as a (temporary) culinary hobby or an attempt to achieve personal wellness. In social situations, vegans may function as a trigger to omnivores’ cognitive dissonance, and therefore hardly any omnivore is looking forward to hearing about the marvels of veganism at a party, for instance. Vegans are generally considered killjoys. In fact, Twine (2014) argues that vegans can willfully occupy a “killjoy position” as a world-making project. He (ibid.) hereby draws from Sara Ahmed’s (2013) influential feminist stance that being “estranged from” can be what enables a “consciousness of”. In this manner, our seemingly individual and small-scale vegan practices connect to the feminist view of the personal as political, considering that personal experiences and daily practices are integral to political activism (Ophélie, 2016). Thus, while scientific evidence of the global benefits of veganism is clear, and perhaps *unlike* (other) forms of environmental activism, it seems critical to articulate one’s positionality as a vegan artist and academic. As noted earlier, our food choices cannot be seen as separate from patriarchy and gender. I align with the thinking that meat eating is an inherent part of male dominance, and eating animals acts as a mirror and representation of patriarchal values (Thelander, 2018). My main underlying motivations behind the practices discussed in this exposition, and my everyday life, therefore, is to destabilize such patriarchal consumption and resist the violence ingrained in animal-based food.

To further unpack the cultural norm of meat eating and to understand *how* we promote veganism in our work, I will now discuss an extreme opposition to veganism, cannibalism. Thelander (2018) notes how only cannibals and vegans are consistent in their choice of foods; vegans refuse any kind of meat, and cannibals, on the other hand, are just as consistent and accept all meat – even human flesh. Here it is important to remember that veganism is a practice, a theoretical perspective, and an *identity* category (Wright, 2021). Regarding the latter, the Citizen Surgery Collective takes a reverse approach to the representation of veganism, suggesting cannibalistic activity when eating edible body simulators. This is controversial from more viewpoints than just the unsettling thought of us eating human flesh. Namely, cannibalism in fairy tales is typically a male activity, and only witches, the warped or monstrous women in the eyes of a patriarchal world, become the token female cannibals (Adams, 1990). While our collective cooking and eating rituals merge the scientific approach to the body with the monstrous, it is essential to point out that cannibalism is neither a joke nor a reality here. The practices align with philosophical questions about the future (of) meat and the dissolving of the human and nonhuman animal dichotomy. More specifically, cannibalism is not merely a horror fantasy or a cult practice. *Victimless* cannibalism could, and perhaps should, be part of our food future too. The advances of in vitro or lab-grown flesh (LGF) might provide a solution to decreasing animal suffering and death. However, LGF cultivated from animal cells still reifies the false human-animal dichotomy, which is one of the significant reasons to consider lab-grown *human* flesh; ultimately, fake meat reinforces the idea that we cannot live without meat on some level (Milburn, 2016). This attitude of edibility and sacrifice is already or still represented in the aesthetics of most of the current vegan protein in the supermarkets; “meatless meat” is generally created to convert or convince people into veganism in an attempt to fool the male gaze and palate (Sinclair, 2016). However, to my knowledge, no vegan graves for or particularly enjoys the aesthetics of meat-simulating protein.

VIDEO 2. Lunchtime Surgery Class trailer. (2022). https://vimeo.com/821551898/d6446d5227

COGNITIVE DISSONANCE AS AN ARTISTIC METHOD

Cooking and eating are central in a diversity of scholarly inquiries, both as a method and object of study. This is also the case in our practice-based research. As an object of inquiry, we explore avenues to promote veganism in and through surgery simulation. As an artistic method and form, our practices manifest as a variation of sensory food gathering (Harris, 2022), and we are performing "diagnostic cooking and tasting" in a radical-utopian world. Our methods simulate and draw from several traditions and schools by including strategies of fictional and prefigurative activism, performing arts, do-it-yourself (DIY) hacker culture, sensory ethnography, and contemplative research. The attitude of DIY and the format of a tutorial are in significant roles in bringing forth our often-disguised voices of resistance: our work is not just a demonstration of how *we* resist, but because it includes audience participation in an attempt to elicit a response of uneasiness, the work makes it experiential how the *viewer's body* might resist the idea of eating (human) flesh. In creating dishes that suggest cannibalism, our work is inspired by Williams Gamaker's (2020) concept and practice of fictional activism, performative-cinematic reimagining and re-enactments of the colonial past, and countering imperial image-violence in particular. Another kindred approach to our ways of resistance, prefigurative activism, centers around prefiguration as in creating alternative futures in the here and now (Maeckelbergh, 2011). Thus, the focus becomes the materialization and embodiment of novel future directions; these need to be first imagined and "rehearsed" before they can establish themselves more widely. In prefigurative activism, seemingly banal actions, such as slicing bread as the body, become constitutive in creating everyday alternative spaces and social change (Ophélie, 2016). Both through the lens of fictional activism and prefigurative activism, our practices expose the arbitrariness and distortions in the current human-nonhuman power relations and imagine and demand multispecies justice by cooking and eating the simulated human body and offering that to the nonhuman other as well.

VIDEO 3. DermaBread Tutorial. (2021). https://vimeo.com/640681839/f957f4e72d

Regarding the destabilization of the patriarchy in our work, perhaps the most interesting question is what is actually happening in the juxtaposition of surgery and baking/eating. As the basic concept, we are deliberately stimulating an experience of cognitive dissonance by paralleling surgery with eating, as this leads to a suggestion of cannibalism. In *Lunchtime Surgery Class*, the event that could be a patriarchal meal or a view of the surgery bench is distorted by (simulated) female surgeons. It is a simulation on simulation, namely, a simulation of a virtual surgery class on a simulated body. Equally disturbing than cannibalism, perhaps, is the arrival of the more-than-human, a rescue cat, and him sniffing the body at the end of the class. The class participants spontaneously adore the cat, which, very appropriately, is a naturally anti-patriarchal being and the witch's companion.

The short film *DermaBread*, in turn, creates a variation for the trigger of cognitive dissonance. In this case, cognitive dissonance emerges from the moment of demonstrating what counts as a deep injury by pressing a sharp vegetable knife slowly from top to bottom of the body simulator: it feels "wrong" to sink the knife into the body (as it should). This is seemingly done to establish the definition of a "deep injury," yet another trigger for uneasiness because of the brutal knife insult (which would be acceptable to a piece of steak on the plate). Preparing food that looks like the body is here not a Halloween trick/treat, which, however, typically do tap into the cognitive dissonance triggered by cannibalism. Instead, it is a conscious effort and site of material testing to replicate layers of the human body. Such fragmentation of the body is charged with meanings: it is not only a strategy to bypass the cognitive dissonance of meat eating but, more widely, a method of objectification concerning animals and women alike. To reverse and transform such predispositions, the women, who are culturally often represented as sexualized cuts of meat (Adams, 1990), are here molding the body, cutting the simulated human meat, and eating it.

VIDEO 4. DermaBread Trailer. (2022). https://vimeo.com/628183846/1df93e5853

The experience of cognitive dissonance in the *Lunchtime Surgery Class* culminates in the moment of transition from surgery to eating. Here, the victimless and fictional cannibalism functions as a promotion of veganism. This suggestion progresses through several steps in the form of a surgery class: 1. *Establishing food as the human body* by surgical mise-en-scene and practice. Simultaneously this is an analogy between the operation theatre and the dining table and, implicitly, a parallel between the human body and the animal body, the latter of which is commonly seen on a plate. 2. *Eating the body*. 3. *Offering the body to be eaten by a nonhuman animal* (cat in *Lunchtime Surgery Class*, dog with *BoneCracker*). The last two steps are geared toward purposeful arousal of the meat-related cognitive dissonance but also toward the first-person experience of (mis)trust and power imbalance when the participant is asked to eat the unidentifiable simulators we have cooked.

To interlace the operation theatre with a dining table, we are using kitchen utensils and accessories and mixing these with actual surgical instruments in different ratios, the “teacher” being the closest to an actual surgeon and the “students” having varying degrees of fusion ensembles including eyelash curlers and Stanley knives. The practices of the Citizen Surgery Collective manifest the aesthetics of the underground: the sites of production are virtual and domestic, reflecting the lack of professional space or access to these due to the pandemic and competition for the spaces at the university. The Zoom images are, technically speaking, raw: they include variable lighting conditions with shadows and digital glitches such as frozen images and echoing acoustic conditions. As such, the practices thus fail to comply but also actively resist the industry standard demands for film quality (and budget). Nevertheless, the role of the familiar Zoom view here exceeds the emphasis on domesticity and virtual community. The meaning of chosen top camera angle replicates the first-person view of a surgeon, and it is our most accessible way to witness the operations in remote locations of the team. However, as opposed to the top-view of an actual surgeon, we don’t maintain the roles as perceivers outside and above as omniscient narrators (Young, 1997); the fact that we are eating the simulator and thus it disappears from the plate in front of the viewers’ eyes, blurs this inside-outside boundary maintained in actual surgery.

While the experience of cognitive dissonance is one of our central strategies, contemplation is an important quality and method in our work as well. Next to the concentrated focus on surgical steps, in some of our performative workshops, we are incorporating contemplative exercises and ASMR-style techniques as a code of sensitization before the actual surgery assignments. The participants are guided to “awaken” their senses, slow down and tune into their bodies by various sensory triggers and haptic movement exercises as a step-by-step protocol narrated and demonstrated by the collective.

Image 3. Koski, K./Citizen Surgery Collective. (2021). *DermaBread 2.0 Participant Plate.*

LANGUAGE OF (NON)VIOLENCE

Language and dialogue are central strategies of resistance in the Citizen Surgery Collective practices. Our work connects to the views in which medicine is perceived as an aristocratic discourse, manifesting in an authoritative, monologic, and sacralized language (Young, 1997). To resist such power structures, dialogue is a significant medium for deconstructing the language in surgery. Our practices draw from feminist and critical animal studies' accounts of naming, misnaming, and silencing. These consider, for instance, that euphemisms associated with cooking and eating meat follow from the "obscurantist vocabulary" of slaughterhouses and euphemisms for killing (Beirne, 2014). Speech and terminology thus have multiple simultaneous roles in our work. First of all, our dialogue includes the voices of thinking and making: group conversations before, during, and after our recipe experiments to share our material findings and support the sense of collective. Next, and more specific to the research output, a voice-over is used to indicate the educational steps of the tutorial, such as calling the name of the instrument at hand or a name of a skin layer, giving the procedure its rhythm. Intertwined with these two modes of speech, the surgical team generates awkward and improvisational diagnostic commentaries about sensory perception while purposefully avoiding naming what is being eaten. In some ways, the commentaries manifest aspects of "the absent referent" at the dinner table, as in erasing the animal from the language of food on the plate and keeping the meat eater separate from the animal (Adams, 1990).

While the teacher's simulator is ambiguous, the students evidently operate slices of bread; however, avoid naming it as such. Thus, we are exploring methods of suggesting that the simulator could be of human origin, too, by our hand choreography and ways of touching the simulator, props, and language or the absence thereof. The concept of the absent referent is particularly interesting in the context of simulation: educational simulators typically aim to manifest identifiability and fidelity to their referent. At the same time, most cooking with meat disguises explicitly the fact that there ever was an animal. Indeed, nose-to-tail cooking purposefully exhibits the dead animal body as a whole. However, *nose-to-tail* is also a euphemism. It sounds cuter than the process of killing actually is. Reversely, *head-to-toe* cooking would likely sound controversial, meaning that the vertical human body is seen as superior to the nonhuman body on all fours. For Adams (ibid.), the live animal is the "absent referent" in the concept of meat and very literally absent by being dead. Towards the film's end, *Lunchtime Surgery Class* provokes this gap by introducing a feline at the table. While western omnivores typically reject cats and dogs for food, the universal absent referent is resurrected in the film and given agency to eat the simulated human.

Image 4. Koski, K., Soula, N., van Veen, A./Citizen Surgery Collective. (2021). *DermaBread Ad.*

Restraining from naming altogether is one strategy for discomfort. No word is used for the simulator in *Lunchtime Surgery Class:* it also does not represent a specific organ or anyone's whole body. Both the body and the verbal referent are absent. The simulator is a brownie shape and size rectangular, which could have been detached from several body sites and various species. Its anatomical abstraction blurs the human-nonhuman body border and draws attention to other aspects, such as the gruesomeness of the surgical protocol. In *DermaBread*, the skin layers are purposefully named (though the teacher struggles with these) to establish the bread as the body. Since we are customed to learning about the *human* skin from a visual cross-section, the simulator, which is also filmed in profile, is readily accepted as a reference to the

human body. In fact, naming the simulator in a particular way is another avenue to poke the cultural uneasiness about seeing the human body as food. The name *DermaBread* purposefully merges two easily identifiable elements that do not belong together, the skin and bread. Moreover, in our participatory performances, the dialogue addresses the gastronomic language that disguises violence (even though it uses metaphors such as "skin of the milk"); we are altering the perception of food during tasting. Our participant responses reflect the power language has to change the sensory perception, such as the taste and mouthfeel of the ingredients: the eating experience is skewed by calling the white layer of the *DermaBread 2.0* fat. However, language and voice are not the only ways our mouths produce meaning in the tutorials. We bring the sounds of chewing to the table, too, a potentially disgust-evoking experience for those with selective sound sensitivity syndrome, misophonia, triggered here by sounds of eating (Cavanna & Seri, 2015). In terms of sensory subtleties, however, speaking with food in the mouth communicates the simulator's moist level to a careful listener.

Image 5. Soula, N./Citizen Surgery Collective. (2021). *DermaBread 2.0.*

FOOD AS THE BODY

The focus on instruments and sensory skills is a key to understanding the historical integration of various knife-based practitioners: butchers, barbers, and surgeons. Surgery, in fact, originates from a butchery in so far as to utilize the same instruments and skills and by being conducted by the same individuals who navigated between different sites of operation. As citizen surgeons working with surgical techniques, with selected edible ingredients that simulate the human body, we connect to both these past practices and discussions on future meat: our seemingly underdeveloped techniques appear more as butchers (though not all the forms of surgery are subtle either), but the materiality and especially the political-ethical connotations of these activities raise similar issues as the earlier mentioned lab-grown human flesh and victimless cannibalism. Blending the surgery-butchery boundary can, as such, be experienced as a source of cognitive dissonance. Regardless of it being a gross insult to the body, based on its aims, surgery is typically seen as a mode of repair geared toward improving bodily functions. Butchery, on the other hand, however skillfully conducted, concerns a utilitarian approach to and fragmentation of a dead body. The fact that the same individuals used to be in charge of both of these knife-bound enterprises is a manifestation of something that causes uneasiness with our present knowledge and values but, at the time, was considered as normal as eating animals currently is.

Image 6. Soula, N./Citizen Surgery Collective. (2020). *Making BoneCracker.*

Regarding the method of associating food with the body, our kitchen-grown victimless flesh imitates dishes which, through various techniques of cooking and baking, are constructed around a cavity of liquid such as poached eggs or a lava cake; the incision to the surface layer releases a more fluid substance, which we aim to remove by drainage. As a hybrid set of performative and screen-based bioart practices, our work draws not just from biomedical science but from art traditions with entirely different temporalities, such as oil painting. Like the body in pathology, the corpse, the edible simulator can be seen as a form of still life, the operation of which results in a "small murder"; the (projected) life is stilled, and the body has taken the character of a material object (Young, 1997). (Of course, in the context of eating animals, the still life of meat on the plate results from a big murder). The slowly progressing video and photographic "still lives" of our collective are being operatively and reversely "painted" with vegan ingredients through stages of deconstruction. However, some of our operations end with the body being put together through stitching or bone glue, for instance. This simulates the mechanics of an actual surgery. That is to say, instead of being merely dissected, the body under surgery is, in some ways, being *manufactured* by the sculptural practice of operations (Hirschauer, 1991).

In *Lunchtime Surgery Class*, every prop in the image is utilized, and most of them are multipurposed. For instance, some students use the same cutlery for surgery and eating. The raisins are removed from one of the breads as skin anomalies before eating it. Also, the drinks have a dual purpose: sparkling water as the sterile liquid is utilized both externally for sanitization and internally as a beverage. There are purposefully large variations in the fidelity of our simulators, and the main point is not to achieve full anatomical accuracy. In fact, as the referent is rendered uncanny and ambiguous, the cut *could* be from many body sites and types of species, visually perhaps mostly reminding one of the raw fish. Though this changes after the teacher makes the incision, just because agar agar as an epidermis does not create a flesh-like viscosity.

Given that the three students practice with a slice of bread (or a bun) each, there emerges a question about the relationship between materiality and meaning regarding the process in which the *bread* comes to represent the body. While cooking and eating can be seen as (female) forms of care, they also hold powerful potential for ritual and sacrifice. Eating specifically represents a sacrament in many religions, with the primary purpose of expressing nonduality or becoming one. Bread (and dough), in particular, is a significant religious metaphor, most evidently representing the body of Christ in Christianity (Serradell, 2009). Furthermore, in some sacred rituals of Tibetan Buddhism, the dough is shaped and decorated in a particular manner to represent the body of an enlightened being, and a piece of the dough is eaten by the practitioners (L. Ludwig, personal communication, March 15, 2023). How the dough is shaped, who offers the bread, and why, when and where it is being eaten are considered in such rituals. However humble, universal, and low-cost bread is, our simulation slices inevitably also connect to these pre-existing traditions of ritual use of the bread. Thus we are not only simulating the surgical ritual but imagining fictional modes of collective sensitization and analysis, in this case, by conducting diagnostics by taste and "breaking the bread," ultimately in support of nonviolent modes of inquiry and species equality.

DISCUSSION

This exposition has highlighted aspects of the work by the Citizen Surgery Collective that challenge the animal-based food systems by creating edible vegan simulators for combined surgery training and diagnostic tasting. Given the impurity of our collective's varying convictions as vegans and practices of veganism in general, how might our ambiguous methods and the associated meanings then promote veganism? Moreover, and more generally, what might art and artists contribute to expanding other forms of animal rights activism? For one, the performative, participatory, and fictional forms of resistance and/or promotion have the capacity to make things *experiential*. This could concern challenging our collective multispecies past or current justice-sacrificing practices and, in stimulating social change, prefiguring cross-disciplinary and collective compositions and rituals for alternative futures. Regarding the edible simulators, our methods appear as modes of *estrangement* from the everyday and make the eating experience dubious, including sensory confusion about what is being tasted. Also, the voices of resistance and promotion are not literal but *disguised*; we don't offer a vegan cooking class (though the recipe is being given) but unsettle the participants by stimulating a cognitive dissonance associated both with eating human flesh and animals eating humans. In so doing, we are demanding the participants' *trust* in that we don't offer anything harmful to them, and thus stimulate an experience of food-related power disbalance in the first person.

While our practices have been influenced by Adam's (1990) thinking on the sexual politics of meat, it is necessary to reflect upon the voices that criticize her somewhat dichotomous presentation, and reinforcement of male-female and human-animal polarities, for instance. As an alternative to such dichotomies, Malatino (2011) suggests that we should consider the long history of differentiating beings along a *graded scale* from fully human to nonhuman and also that we should move into specificity instead of conflation. How, then, might we respond to the disturbing multispecies injustice with these in mind; on the one hand, avoiding differentiation and being specific while simultaneously wishing to make the animal referent present at the dinner table (and eventually setting the table for them)? While the beginning of *Lunchtime Surgery Class*, like most surgery, renders the procedure generic without referring to any particular body (Young, 1997), the diagnostic discussion introduces various shapes of bodies with different "skin" tones and textures and identifies the individual characteristics of these.

Proximities seem important when considering artistic strategies to promote multispecies justice and veganism. So, there is a perceived and human-invented gap between human animals and nonhuman animals. There are also euphemisms and generalities disguising the violence of meat eating, thus separating the animal from the meat eater. By reuniting practices that have been separated (surgery/butchery), we unite beings that have been differentiated (human/animal). We are thus not only juxtaposing the lesser status of domestic skills of baking and cooking (when not by a male Michelin star level chef) with the higher aristocratic status of surgery skills and the lesser status animal with the higher status animal but reversing and merging these in various

combinations. In addition, the contextual layer in our practice is fusing not only surgery and science and domestic cooking and eating but also spaces and characteristics of sacred and contemplation. Through various assimilations, the practices hold an aspect of ritual in them, not merely through re-enactments of surgical rituals (Moynihan, 1920; Hirschauer, 1991) but by acknowledging the life cycle (of anything living) through birth and body emergence, gradual or rapid deconstruction, followed by metabolism, ultimately reminding that we are all edible (Snyder, 1990).

Image 7. Koski, K./Citizen Surgery Collective; Rohen et al. (1983). (2023). *BoneCracker.*

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