

Synaesthesia of colour, taste and mood: the Futuristic cuisine as a global art

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Among all the avant-garde movements Futurism was that which pursued the more radical convergence of the arts in a synthesis of the five senses. No longer conceived as a pure response to the need for nourishment, cooking has evolved as a true "art of the palate" with an inevitable relationship with the visual aspect. The renewal followed the publication of the "*Manifesto of Futurist cuisine*" as well as a related research that recognized food as a matter of formal expression, which could stimulate the enjoyment of all the senses. Marinetti's and Fillia's cookbooks of Futurist cuisine highlighted the role of the artist in the elaboration of a new conception of food, in which plastic and chromatic aspects were privileged because of their interaction with sight and touch. The research illustrates the role of colour in the gustatory synaesthesia which involved food as well as the room in which it was consumed. A didactic experience verified the mood described in some special futuristic menus of Marinetti's with photo collages. Students' interpretation evidences a relationship between the mood and the colours in the choice of similar palettes.

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Art and food innovation

After a long oblivion, in the Eighties, we are witnessing an enthusiastic rediscovery of Futurism, which was the avant-garde movement that more than others pursued the convergence of all arts through a radical experimentation. It involved formal arts as well as many aspects of daily life with the purpose of a full renovation of social habits [1]. The Avant-garde pursued continuity among different arts, such as painting, sculpture and music. Futurists went further, they searched for the aesthetic value in the simultaneous stimulus of all the senses so that only food can stimulate the *taste* as well as other senses. The claim to a fully global art required therefore the involvement of cuisine! Actually, nothing satisfies the animal sensitivity as food so far, because in the consumption of the meal both sight and smell anticipate the tactile stimulation of taste that matches the act of eating. Many idiomatic sentences, as well as the attention of peoples to food preparation, highlight our instinctive tendency to eat first with eyes and then with our mouth. Therefore Futurists couldn't neglect food and meals consumption, which once exceeded the satisfate appetite, had already evolved as an "art". Food and cuisine could become a topic of the very global art they were pointing to [2].

So, the present renewed interest in Futurism is directed to its cuisine artistic experimentations, with particular attention to many food events that introduce the Futuristic concept in a funny blending of sounds, colourful shapes, smells and flavours. Most scholars focused on the movement's features and stressed the movement's attention to a synesthetic approach in the blending of formal arts, especially with music and everyday life activities that involved cuisine as well.

The Futuristic Cuisine is well known after the publishing of several editions of the recipe collection that integrate the "*Manifesto della Cucina Futurista*", although with a low compliance with a scholar approach. [3] The book summarizes the Futuristic food concepts and tells some anecdotes explaining the full experience of a Futuristic meal. It ends with a collection of provocative recipes and a Marinetti's suggestion for special menus. Those recipes and their introduction explain the importance of all the five senses in the quite erotic pleasure for food they were calling for and how to implement their the oretical concepts [4]. Actually, they only outline colour, stressing the importance of its presence without any reference to specific choices. As a matter of fact, sight was a sense as important as the others.

Despite colour concerned food explicitly, table and rooms, its documentation in cuisine is missing, with few exceptions in written descriptions. Therefore, the present research is based mainly on text and black and white images of the original recipe book and contemporary description of architectures, which describe the colour of interiors that are not supported by historic photos. The aim is to investigate the role of colour in food, table and rooms, reconstructing hypothetical palettes from written descriptions of rooms and recipes. Only graphic and ceramic arts offer a reliable example of real bright full hues of colours used in numerous advertising posters and in several experimental table potteries. All of them had innovative shapes and full colours. Therefore, just like in a synesthetic mood, we only guess the colour *in, on* and *around* the set table. According to those descriptions, we can, later on, repaint pictures in order to show the colour in food and interiors. Even if it is not the real colour, it can help us to imagine the hues they preferred and compare the combination of colours in specific palettes. Figures 1-3 show colours in advertising and pottery; Figures 4 and 5 add the colour of food ingredients to Futuristic recipe designs, using different techniques. A set of redrawn uncoloured photos suggests the colour of some interiors, following written descriptions or developing suggestions from pictures of similar buildings, spaces or objects.



Figure 1: *The Futuristic colourful table: Diulgeroff's pottery for Albisola ceramics show a formal research that linked colour and shape. The indicative colour palette show the predominance of melted warm shades, stressed trough a moderate use of black and white.*



Figure 2: The futuristic Colourful table: Diulgeroff's wish lists for the "Taverna del Santopalato". Colour palettes of pictures decorating the menus are only indicative but they show similar shades and the preference for warm hues.



Figure 3: Depero's advertising billboards and cocktails recipes. Posters' Palettes show the prevalence of warm saturated hues.

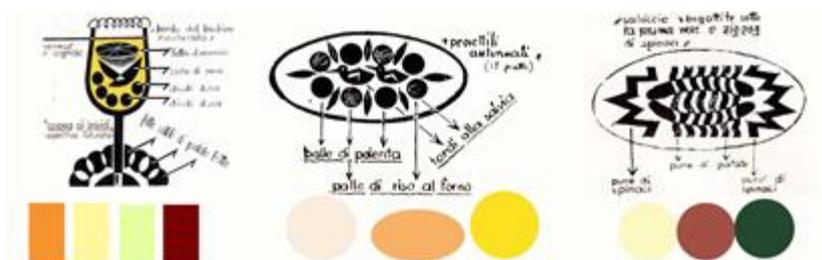


Figure 4: Fillia's graphic recipes with their suppository colour palette, as a consequence of natural colour of foods.



Pranzo estivo di pitturascultura

Pranzo parolibero primaverile

Figure 5: Marinetti's menus for special lunches. Student's visualisation of the "Summer lunch of painting and sculpture" and "Freeword Spring lunch". Students used similar palettes to describe the same situation.

Marinetti couldn't pass up the wonderful opportunity that food and cuisine offered to the construction of a global art. Short after publishing the first Manifesto, in 1909 he affirmed "*the importance of nutrition on the creative, fruitful and aggressive capacity of breeds*", arguing that "*We think, we dream and we act according to what we drink and we eat up*". The cuisine could be a great testing ground for new, unusual combinations of flavours, smells, colours and shapes to produce multi-sensory stimuli, meaning gustatory, olfactory, visual, tactile, not to mention auditory [5].

The very experimental approach developed twenty years later, long after that the first Futuristic cook Jules (Jarro) Maincave joined the movement in 1913, while Apollinaire formulated the Cubist culinary theory in "*Le Cubisme culinarie*" and Carlo Carrà wrote the "*Manifesto of painting, sounds, noises and smells*". The French chef published (*Fantasio*, 1st september 1913) an interview, in which he presented his original concept about the search of harmony in cuisine, regarding the balance of the setting of a table with the colours and flavours of the food. He complained about the boredom of traditional flavours, suggesting new audacious combinations and a more modern table setting without any other sensory relationship. Maincave's interview anticipated Paul Bocuse's proposals of Nouvelle Cuisine by decades [5].

The interview, however, followed the first publication of Marinetti's *Manifesto of the Futurist Cuisine* and the subsequent promotion of a research that recognised food as a formal expression of ingredients, capable of stimulating the enjoyment of all senses. Years later Sonzogno published the book *Manifesto of Futurist cuisine* by Marinetti and Fillia (Luigi Colombo). Authors specially preached the elimination of pasta, which weighed Italians' bright minds. Marinetti stated that macaroni spoiled the... "*the lively spirit and the passionate generous intuitive soul of Neapolitans who, in eating it, develop their typical ironic and sentimental skepticism, which often truncates their enthusiasm.*" (Comoedia, 20th January 1931) They called the abolition of cutlery, not to spoil the tactile pleasure of the body, and the traditional condiments as well as politics at the dinner table. Furthermore they invited chemists to invent new "*simultaneous and changing mouthfuls*" flavours that could be accompanied by music, poetry and perfumes. Menus and recipes, which they called "formulas", completed the Manifesto. The collection of recipes in the book emphasises the role of artists in the birth of a new vision of food, in which formal aspects of shape and colour interact with sight and touch.

The futuristic cuisine, as a transversal and "interdisciplinary" art, involves all the aspects of food, starting from something contradictory which also engages the competence of both doctors, to prove the nutritional value of new proposals, and of chemists invited to create synthetic food to feed human body with pills, artificial protein compounds, synthetic fats and vitamins. That was the final goal of the futuristic cuisine! The substitute for real food would make it possible to reduce the cost of living, therefore of working hours. In any case it would not have erased the taste for synesthetic experiences, which Marinetti describes in his writings.

The attention is fulfilled with the setting of the dining room and the table. Tullio d'Albisola's and Diulgheroff's rich pottery production is notable as it shows combinations of bright full colours with recurring hues [6] (Figure 1) and the graphic and chromatic research by Medardo Rosso and Diulgheroff (Figure 2) in Santopalato's menus, or Depero's and Prampolini's advertising billboards [7]. The advertising graphic, which was a very invention of Futurism, also shows the choice of full colours and the preference for melted hues (Figure 3). In any case Futurists do not evidence the preferential use of primary colours as other contemporary Avantgardes did.

Posters, which were provokingly called "*cartelli lanciatori*" because of their communicative role, advertised food industry's products with colourful visual messages. Advertising design actively involved the Futurists, anticipating today development of Design, not only in what food is concerned. Actually Marinetti and co-workers understood the importance of packaging, and then that of marketing, with memorable inventions such as Fillia's spiral of the "Amaro Cora" or Depero's bottle and the special red shade that made Bitter Campari famous [8].

A further demonstration of the involvement of Futurism in the food industry is the Poem of the milk dress [9], published in 1937. The pamphlet, that was illustrated by Bruno Munari, was a promotional of Lanital, an autarkic textile produced from casein by SNIA Viscosa. The booklet demonstrates the strong relationship between Futurism and the young food industry, which was the best expression of times.

Recipes, menus and tables

The approach was completely new. The Futurist cuisine is characterized by irony, imagination and creativity, which combine the presence of colour and sounds with the suggestion of a tactile pleasure in the consumption of meals. In many recipes the contrast of hues should increase the dish appeal as pleasure for eyes. Some of them describe the "layout" of food as in a project, with simple pen drawings. The two most popular dishes were Nicola Diulgheroff's "*Pollofiat*" and "*Carneplastico*" that summarize

the concept of the relationship with formal arts without any direct reference to colour. The first was a roasted chicken with an iron ball stuffing that gave a unique metallic taste; the other was a high meatloaf, stuffed with vegetables with a sweet-salty taste and a phallic shape that enhanced the plastic potential of the cooking (Figure 3). In those recipes, which did not get famous thanks to their good taste, the colour is the natural result of the cooking.

Anyway the dish of the Futuristic cuisine is similar to a colourful picture, where the colour contrast highlights the plastic shape, following the concept of “eatable art”, which anticipates some of today trends. Some “*formulas*” such as Fillia’s and other painters’ witness to a higher attention to colour combinations, even if in most cases colour can only be imagined through the description of colourful ingredients, such as pumpkin puree, tomato sauce, spinach, white cheese, chocolate and liquorice [3]. They even suggest the correction with methylene blue, anticipating the industrial use of chemical colours, but generally the futuristic kitchen is coloured by itself, taking advantage from the variety of colours of vegetables. Meat and dough become plastic stuff of a formal research, in which the main subject is not the colour even if it is potentially linked to the colour.

Several recipes show the “food layout” with pictures: in this way cooking becomes a design activity. A careful attention was paid to beverages as well, with the creation of new cocktail recipes, which they translated into “*polibibita*” (Figure 4).

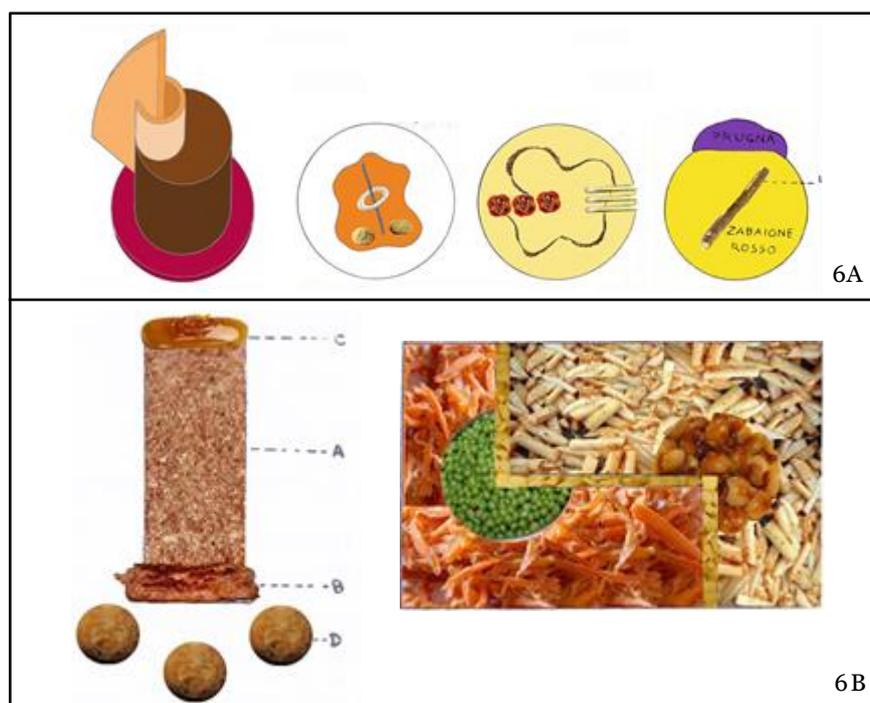


Figure 6: Hypothetical colouring of Fillia’s recipes design with the full colour of the described elements; the colour enhances the plastic shape or the design (6A). The “photo-collage” of most famous Futuristic dishes, the “*Carneplastico*” and the “*Ortocubo*”, with natural images of ingredients covering the “recipe picture” in the recipes book (6B). Pictures shows how soft shadows dominates the cuisine, because the cooking attenuates the original brightness of raw ingredients, especially that of vegetables.

Fillia’s cocktail recipes, as well as some food ones, are graphic images that show the beverage preparation as it were a design drawing, with captions that explain the stylized representation and stress the colour in the glass (Figure 6A). Other food recipes suggest compounds of bold hues in a simple geometric design, using spinach, tomato sauce, milk, pumpkin puree and so on. The alternation of ingredients in plates show that they chose them according to their natural colour and that the result

should impact on the sight more than on the taste. The “*Ortocubo*” was merely a composition of vegetables (Figure 6B). The two pictures complete the recipes designs of these foods as they are printed in the cookbook, with colour or photo-collages, only to help the idea of compounds that show a preference for warm hues between yellow and brown. The careful layout of ingredients compensates for the soft contrast of natural colour and the warm colour of cooked food should contrast with the aseptic design of restaurant rooms, dominated by the metallic glow of the aluminium.

The reconstruction of colour in food shows how it accomplishes the shape and the composition of different ingredients. The colour is only indicative. The *mise en plat* of food was the final step of cooking, instead of being the first one of eating. The full dish was an odorous and attractive picture to touch and to eat with hands or even with the mouth directly. Cutlery was no worth using: you had to touch it with your hands, the face and the mouth to fully enjoy the tactile pleasure of eating. Besides the food, recipes, or rather “*formulas*” as the Futurists called them, also describe the landscape, the interior background of the room, the sounds and the environmental feeling that ought to feature the meal; feeling and mood were even more important than the food itself. Formal features (namely *colour*, *shape* and “*texture*”) and other suggestions seem to be more important than the taste, as it would be speaking about food. All together they melt with music or noises that integrates the hearing with other tastes of eating. In this regard, some of Marinetti’s special menus gathered in the cookbook are quite significant. They are short tales concerning the environment more than the food. Each meal evokes a feeling; the mood and the environment are more important than the taste in the order of the food.

In Marinetti’s work, the poet wins the amateur cook; meals – and therefore food - become a mood and the poet summarises the feeling of all the senses in short tales without images [3]. These menus give a clear suggestions about what Futuristic synaesthesia means! The provocatively titles suggest strong feelings rather than tasty flavours: “*Freeword Spring lunch*”, “*Summer lunch of peinture and sculpture*”, “*Nocturnal loving lunch*”. Sometimes, namely in “*Eroic winter lunch*”, Marinetti claimed an aesthetic and contemplative consumption of the meal with sight, hearing and smell, without eating anything. The food becomes a mood.

This book offered the opportunity to show the students’ imagination and representation ability: they were required to match Marinetti’s menus with interior design in digital picture, visualising the room and the environment of some of Marinetti’s menus, without any strict information about colour. Despite the fact that the students (almost 50) worked independently, most of them used very similar palettes to represent the same situation. Of course in these photo-collages the colour is a not exactly measurable suggestion because we worked on photos, anyway this experience demonstrates an intuitive correspondence between moods and colour. It seems to be the obvious consequence of the synaesthesia in the Futurist food (Figures 5 and 7).



Figure 7: Marinetti’s “*Musical autumnal lunch*”. Students’ visualisation of the atmosphere around the table with nothing to eat but smell.

Interiors: the colour as a movie

The first event meant to perform how Futurism and could include the various field of the human life in food experience, was the opening of a restaurant in Torino, where the new futuristic food had to be presented to the public in a futuristic way. For the realization of the scenery that had to host this demonstration, painter Fillia and architect Nicola Diulgheroff were chosen. The purpose was the transformation of Angelo Giachino's restaurant in a proper place for the diffusion of the futuristic cuisine. The name of the restaurant, named by Marinetti at the end of the Circuito di Poesia (The Circuit of Poetry) between the futuristic paintings at the Galleria Codebò, was Taverna del Santopalato (The Holy Palate Tavern). In an interview Fillia himself declares that: *"first of all I ask you to notice that our initiative and our activity for the opening of Santopalato has entirely artistic purposes, creators and engines of our culinary theory. It is not about a Diulgheroff's speculation nor mine. We will simply give to the Tavern a futurist mark... The Tavern... will be decorated by architect Diulgheroff and by me with the exact purpose to move in the futurist debate from theory to practice"*.

In order to offer a better feeling of different flavours, smells, colours and meanings Fillia and Diulgheroff designed a room meant to create an atmosphere, which had to be the summary of mechanical modern life. The Tavern reached a big notoriety even before its inauguration, thanks to several and repeated announcements of its realisation. The inauguration took place on the 8th March 1931. The main hall was a big cubical box, standing beside a smaller one. It was decorated with completely bright, half-circular columns, with big and bright metallic oculus stuck at the half of the height of the wall, which was completely covered with the finest aluminium. This latter was not a simple covering of the wall but it was conceived as a working element of the interior. Fillia wrote in his book *"...dominant aluminium, agile bone structure of a new body, complete with the rhythm of the indirect light. The light is also one of the fundamental reality of modern architecture and it has to be space, it has to be a living part with the other shapes of the construction"* [10].

The shiny and reflective effect of the aluminium had to support the chromatic presence of the futurist dishes. The colour of the posters, the dishes and the people created an effect of chromatic movement, similar to a kaleidoscopic one (Figure 8). This idea of inner space features the room of various projects, which concern in some way Diulgheroff's food retails in the following years. The bar Cinzano in 1932 (Figure 9) and the bar Cora in 1933 (Figure 10), both in Turin, the stand for Rivella company in 1934 at the "Fiera del Levante" in Bari and the Italian restaurant in the "Colonial Exhibition" in Paris proposed again that kaleidoscopic idea of colour and movement, which was generated by reflections of the advertising graphics in the interior.



Figure 8: Hypothetical colour redrawing from historical pictures of the inner space of "Taverna del Santopalato" in Turin.

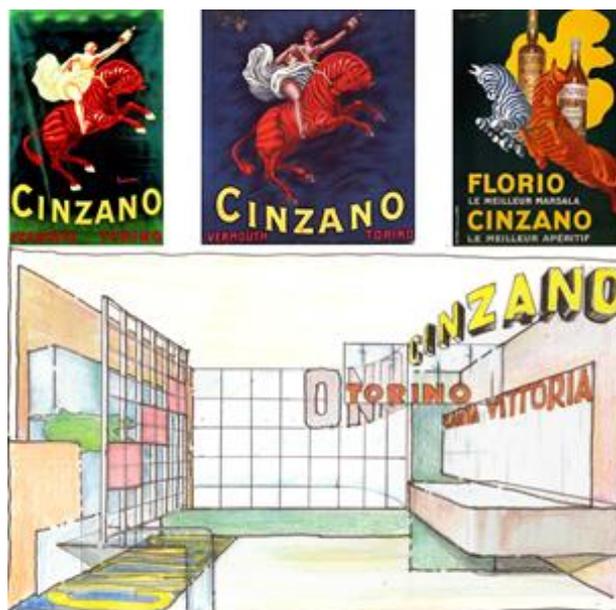


Figure 9: Colour redrawing of the chromatic space in the Cinzano's bar in the First exhibit of Fashion Design in Turin (1932) as a suggestion from contemporary advertising posters.

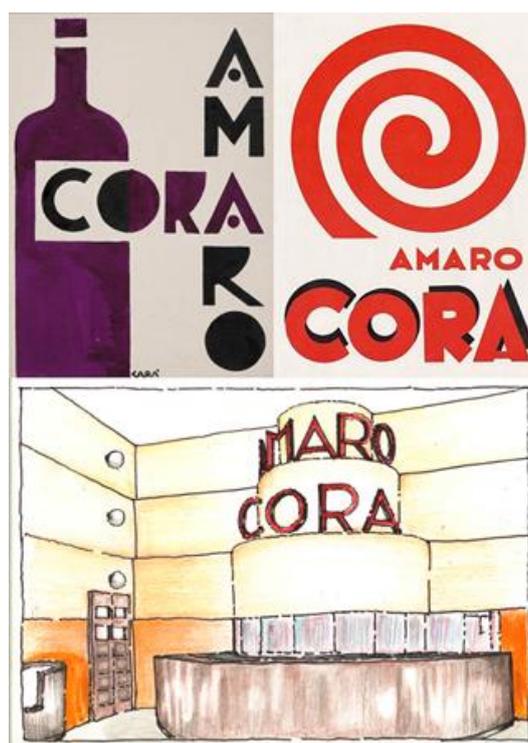


Figure 10: The advertising of Amaro Cora and the recolouring of the interior of Cora bar in the second Fashion Exhibition in 1933 from written description.

Diulgheroff's graphic ability in the advertisement ensured him various assignments from different firms not only as publicist but also as interior designer. He authored the biggest part of the advertising posters for different business, from water to boilers, from building companies to alcoholic beverages. The year after the inauguration of Santopalato, the same architect designed the interior for a new Bar Cinzano in the First Exhibition of Fashion Design, held at Valentino in Torino. Here the materials of the walls are different: metallic grids, mirrors and shiny surfaces. Together with reflective and coloured

coverings, they had the purpose to increase the visual effect of advertising slogans everywhere, also on the floor. The main aim is to recreate the kaleidoscopic image of the Santopalato. This concept of space recalls the Futurist poetry of “*parolibere*” (free words) composition.

The chromatic use of walls, which were made of different materials, refers to Van Doesburg’s artistic compositions recalling the Neo-Plasticism in a neo-futurist way.

During the Second Exhibition of Fashion Design, held in Torino in 1933, Diulgheroff designed the interior of the Bar Cora. The room was narrow and long with the entrance on one of the shorter sides; therefore the architect placed the counter on the long side, on the left of the entrance. Spheres and slogans on the same wall generated the lighting. The wall in front of the counter showed orange shades that became clearer upwards; it was illuminated with diffusers, in contrast with the aluminium varnished columns (Figure 10). To use the perspective tunnel generated by the proportion of the room in the best way, the architect designed a half-circular counter with decreasing element and put above it the graphic of the bitter beverage “Amaro Cora”.

In this case the colour stresses the structure of the space and underlines the graphics, which have different sizes and colours. There is no kaleidoscopic effect, but the chromaticism accentuates the tunnel effect of the interior. The only chromatic key in the inside of this space are the big posters, painted by Diulgheroff himself, promoting the Metzeger, the beer of Torino and the Amaro Cora, the curtains and the various objects within the room.

The Rivella’s stand designed by Diulgheroff in 1934 for the Fiera del Levante in Bari, probably never realized, was an example of advertising architecture similar to the one for bar Cinzano. Its constructivist interior had reflective materials and the coloured graphics would constitute a strong advertising call. In this case, the reflective effect of materials would guarantee a kaleidoscopic effect of movement in chromatic disorder.

The exterior of the Diulgheroff’s pavilion for Cora at Depero’s Fiera del Levante (1934) (Figure 11) is similar to the Campari pavilion, designed a year before, with a similar big size company logo, overhanging the dimension of the architecture (Figure 10). Again the hypothesis of reconstruction of colours was made from the model of the Atelier Mazzotti, designed by Diulgheroff in 1932.

The use of colour by one of the most important figures of the Futurism in Torino highlights a choice that focused on chromaticism to enhance the structure of that “mechanical” space. Starting from an idea of space and colour influenced by Neo-Plasticism, Diulgheroff gets to a completely innovative interpretation of chromatic movement that breaks the unity of the spatial box, extending the poetry of the painting to the architecture.

The colour and the interior of these food retails are the balancing elements in the static space and the chromatic dynamism of the inner design, based on light games and reflections of the bright graphic.

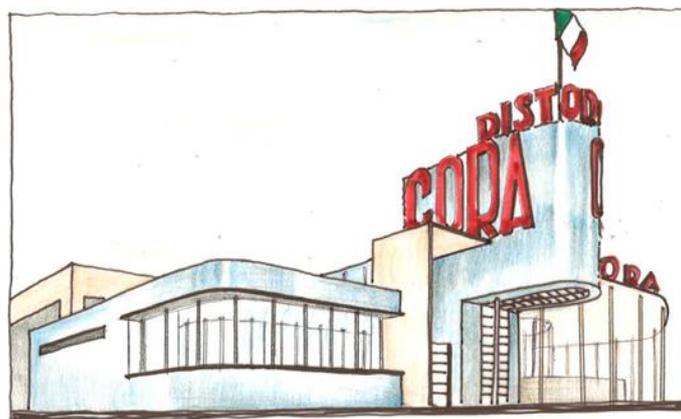


Figure 11: Hypothetical colouring of the Diulgheroff’s stand Cora at “Fiera del Levante” in Bari in 1934.

Conclusions

Futurism stated its theories with some *manifestos* and several provocative public events, which showed its concept of art to contemporary people [contemporaries o solo people]. Most of them were ephemeral happenings, in which global art involved the contemporary stimulus of the different senses.

Cuisine was a good topic because the food combines colour, shape, touch, taste and smell and it can be enjoyed with music to complete the synaesthesia. The importance of colour in the futuristic cuisine refers to food as well to interiors and pottery, but it also involved food as an industry product and therefore the advertising, which was born as graphics. Unluckily we have only a few references to food related events and spaces, but we do have written description, objects and some uncoloured photos. The colour was everywhere important, and it also featured the kaleidoscopic space of reflective, metal covered rooms, but it was only one among the relevant features of Futuristic cuisine, with none overcoming the other.

This paper deals with the use of colour in different topics that can be related to food in Futuristic concept starting from the hypothetical reconstruction of the global image of meals consumption:

- the colour of the food from recipes,
- the colour of the table from objects,
- the colour of interiors from architecture descriptions.

The hypothetical reconstruction of colour palettes from reference is only a tray to enhance the image of food as they *designed* it, without any scientific approach to colour identification, which would require the measurement of real objects that was not possible, or on real food, which makes no sense. Anyway these indicative palettes show a preference for full warm colours and melted hues.

The literary documents confirm the importance of Futurist heritage in the contemporary cuisine. Challenging experiments of Futurist artists, who improvised cooks, left a mark in the renovation of food industry that is recognizable in developments of the Nouvelle Cuisine, the Molecular Cuisine and in today Food Design. They also stressed their concepts through the implicit desire to elevate the cooking to a noble art, equating it to literature and main formal arts.

Recipes and menus emphasise the importance of colour in the gustatory synaesthesia, involving the taste of the food *within* the whole mood of the room in which meals were consumed. The comparison between the formulas by different artists shows a different approach depending on their prevalent training. Of course the most "colourful" recipes are those by painters. In Futuristic cuisine, the use of colour is not a feature in itself, because the colour is only one among the five sensorial perceptions, which affect the mood together with the interior that backgrounds the eating. The fun attempt to show colour trends beyond literary testimonials in a colouring game, detects a pictorial taste of colour in the preference for full hues and warm colour of composite shades. Cold colour is less attractive to eating.

The experience with design students is significant as regards the subtle psychological relationship between the colour and the mood of different menus by Marinetti. Students were called to create photographs illustrating a special Marinetti's menu. They worked alone without any imposition, but their interpretations show very similar palettes for the same menu, even if colour was not quoted, only evoked in the general description of the environmental mood (Figure 7).

The food is the very stuff of the global art.

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