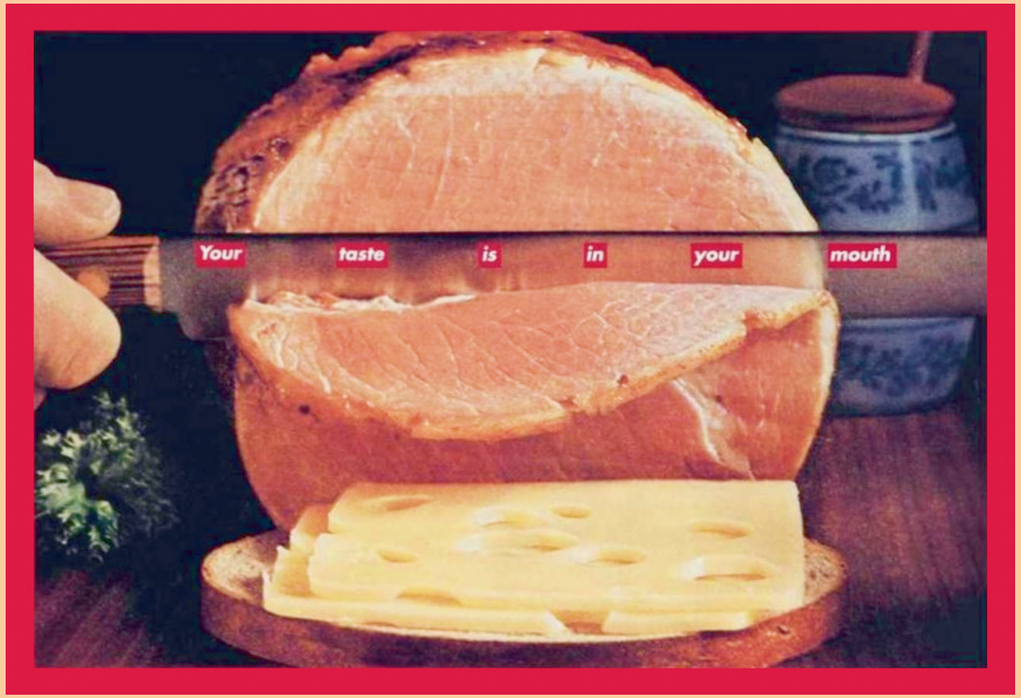
in the visual justification of warfare. Flipping through the book, we stop and ask to whom the vague outlines in the zoomed-in images belong. Whether it is indeed a terrorist, or a child with what looks a lot like a football? What happened to him or her after the moment caught on camera? By singling out the individual, the normal, the everyday in what would otherwise remain an abstraction of warfare, Lambelet unpicks the workings of propagandistic imagery simply by enhancing it to abnormal proportions.

Lambelet simultaneously reveals and makes use of the way in which technology curbs our understanding of things that can in reality not be reduced to algorithms or transcribed into digits. As theorised by Taussig and shown by Simon, Kruithof and Lambelet, visual language enables us to give form to inherently abstract concepts. Paradoxically, this requires the concept to be phrased in terms of abstractions. It is for its perfect ambiguity between the real and the imagined, between detail and abstraction, that the medium of photography has historically been both the enemy and quintessential tool for propaganda. By isolating, enlarging and contextualising visual information sourced from an ever-growing archive of images and text, the aforementioned artists uproot and interfere with the semiotics of contemporary propaganda.

Hinde Haest
(b. 1987, NL) is a curator at Foam who has worked on exhibitions including *Hiroshi Sugimoto – Black Box* and *Stéphanie Solinas – Dominique Lambert / Le Pourquoi Pas?*. Previously, she worked on the Stephen Shore retrospective at Amsterdam's Huis Marseille and as assistant curator of photographs at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. She holds an MSc from SOAS, an MA from University College London, and has written for *Metropolis M* and *Aperture* amongst others. Hinde lives and works in Amsterdam.

Appetizing



Untitled (Your taste is in your mouth), 1985
©Barbara Kruger, courtesy of the artist and Mary Boone Gallery, NYC

By Kim Knoppers

The rise of the multinational monopoly has seen food's nutritional value overshadowed by its aesthetic qualities. In recent years, photographs of impossibly perfect food have moved from advertisement billboards to the online profiles of 'foodies'; selling a lifestyle that erases the true complexity of the food industry, whilst simultaneously declaring 'authenticity'.

Various artists, however, have looked beyond this seemingly impeccable façade, creating counter images that investigate the very production, advertisement, and ultimately the consumption of food.

In a 1995 work American Barbara Kruger combines a succulent photo of a rolled joint of meat, probably from a seventies cookbook, with the witty slogan *Your Taste is in Your Mouth*. That seems straightforward enough. Having started out as a designer for Condé Nast, publisher of magazines including *House and Garden*, *Vanity Fair*, *Bon Appétit* and *The New Yorker*, Kruger soon extended her field of activity to include the visual arts. She appropriates photos from magazines and combines them with catchy slogans that refer to the body, gender or consumerism. Although the title suggests otherwise, Kruger's *Untitled (Your Taste Is in Your Mouth)* illustrates to great effect that taste is not confined to the mouth. There is a close relationship between what the mouth tastes and what the eye sees.

You see before you taste, so the food and advertising industries are continually trying to tempt the eye by serving up illusory images of food. Photography is essential to their efforts. All kinds of refined techniques are used in food photography as ways of pleasing the eye in order to stimulate the taste buds, and therefore the desire to buy. The super glue, tweezers and paintbrushes needed to ensure a hamburger still looks appetizing after hours under the bright lights of the photo studio are now being deployed to construct a picture of health. Final processing in photoshop further increases the difference between the food on our plates and pictures of it.

The food industry's current mirage is all about the pure, simple, honest and traditional. In the wealthiest parts of the world, where consumption is at its height, we are obsessed with 'authentic' food. We see aisle after aisle of it in the supermarket, it's displayed next to the till at the petrol station and it simmers away on hotplates at the works canteen. In food magazines and in glossies, tempting advertisements extol this food hype's new kids on the block. The profusion of pure and authentic food images in two-dimensional, printed form is easily outstripped by the attention it receives online. I'm merely making a wild guess here and it's not even particularly revelatory, but it wouldn't surprise me if the current obsession with authentic food went hand in hand with the hugely increased circulation of online images. The self-consciousness fuelled by social media reinforces the desire to have a healthy body that's fed and sustained by real and pure food.

On Instagram we see plates of quinoa and glasses of green smoothie that are styled to perfection, and #food is already number twenty-five on the list of most popular hashtags. On food blogs, organic recipes are photographed step by step and brought to the attention of a growing number of followers. Quite often financed by the food and advertising industries, the healthy foodie earns a good living. Multinationals too promote these products via online campaigns. In the summer of



Apple, Avocado and Lemon from the series *Image Transfers*, 2012
©Anne de Vries, courtesy of the artist



Efficacy Testing Stream, 2015
©Discipula, courtesy of the artists

2010, McDonald's launched its veggie burger in Germany with a playful photo of a cow composed of vegetables including red pepper, potato, carrot and lettuce. It was an attempt to make a health-conscious target group forget that what the multinational sells is industrially produced food that has little to do with purity or authenticity.

A seductive mainstream image has emerged that celebrates pure food in all its perfection. Boosted by the rise of communications technology and new media, this image is inserted between us and the reality surrounding food, with all the social, economic and political issues that go along with it. Artists gnaw and nibble at this mainstream image and in various ways provide a counterweight to it. Last year saw the publication of the book *Real Food* by British photographer Martin Parr, a collection of brightly coloured photos of food he made all over the world. Parr thrusts an unfiltered reality in our faces: charred chicken, chewed gum and fatty pink sausages, all overexposed and in close up. It's an abomination to the healthy hipster who dominates Instagram with photos of avocado on toast, traditional banana bread and fermented cauliflower with sesame seeds. Parr's fascination with unadorned food dates from 1995. In his *British Food* he presented an almost encyclopaedic survey of what food in the UK really looks like. Parr's photos tell a story that gets beyond the food industry's stage-managed depictions, a story in which food is an expression of identity for much of the British population. As Parr points out, 'If you go to the supermarket and buy a package of food and look at the photo on the front, the food never looks like that inside does it? That is a fundamental lie we are sold everyday.' Replace supermarket with Instagram and this is as true now as it was then.

The series *Images Transfers* (2012) by Dutch artist Anne de Vries consists of two still lifes of gleaming, flawless supermarket fruit. One shows an apple, a pear and a banana, the other an apple, an avocado and a lemon. Photographed with a digital camera, the image travelled via lens, chip, cable, computer components and software to its ultimate form as photo paper hanging in a space. Each digital print comes with a text summarizing its own production process. His work makes explicit the transformation of three pieces of fruit into a digital image via an optical lens. It becomes clear that an image of fruit requires an extensive technical and logistical infrastructure. The simplicity of the image is overshadowed by a stream of information that unravels both the production process and the way images are circulated in the globalizing economy.



Efficacy Testing Stream (2015) - Installation view at bBunkier Sztuki, Krakow Photomonth 2016
©Discipula, courtesy of the artists

United in the Italian artists' collective Discipula, MFG Paltrinieri, Mirko Smerdel and Tommaso Tanini have used stock images of food, bought on Ebay, for their video installation *Efficacy Testing Stream*. In the video the stock images are slid over each other in distinct visual layers. This eliminates the unambiguous layout of the single image. The original photos were made in order to glorify and sell foodstuffs in as efficient a way as possible. In the video they become unusable for that purpose, since they are now chaotic and impossible to read. They serve as a visual backdrop for a voice-over that works through a long list of articles and essays about political and ethical issues related to food. As well as the video, Discipula has made a number of digital photos that were printed on polyethylene terephthalate, known as PET, the plastic used for soft drink bottles and other packaging for food. The strategy of seduction and aesthetics deployed in these stock photos is adopted by Discipula, but its most important goal is subverted. By weakening the communication factor, Discipula undermines the function of the stock photos. Here they are used in an installation that is an open invitation to a more conscious way of dealing with food, to seeing it as a cultural and political aspect of human life.

In his series *Food* (2013), photographer Henk Wildschut takes the sterile, high-tech environment in which most of our food is produced as his subject – in contrast to the romanticized, consumer-driven image propagated by the food industry. We are usually shown cows grazing contentedly in a meadow, or oranges that jump straight from the orchard into a carton, as opposed to the bacteria-free environment in which steel, shine and repetition dominate. For two years Wildschut travelled through the Netherlands and took photographs at the premises of innovative companies engaged in providing food. He visited Bolsward in Friesland, home to the Brandsma dairy. In one of the resulting photos a lone cow is shown inside a wall of glass, its head resting on a metal barrier. Beyond the glass, the meadow beckons. 'How sad. That red-and-white cow never gets out into the meadow', I hear



Plantlab from the series *Food*, 2012
©Henk Wildschut, courtesy of the artist



Melkveehouderij Brandsma from the series *Food*, 2012
©Henk Wildschut, courtesy of the artist

Although we are aware of the seductive methods and marketing strategies of the food industry, we still, against our better judgement, prefer to believe in the romantic image of pure and authentic food.

you thinking. Don't be fooled. Experts will notice that the cow has no ear tag. Brandsma regards such tags as a violation of animal rights and is reconciled to the fact that this means he loses twenty per cent of his EU subsidy. Furthermore, the cows have access to the meadow for six months of the year, which means they are among the thirty per cent of Dutch cows that can graze freely on grass. Wildschut took one of the other photos at Plantlab in Den Bosch. It shows rows of sweet pepper plants bathing in purple light, supported under their axils by strings attached to the ceiling. Not our idea of how a lovely juicy red pepper grows under the dazzling sun of Mexico, yet this way, without pesticides, ten times as many peppers can be produced using ninety percent less water and creating none of the CO_2 emissions that result from overseas transport.

Although we are aware of the seductive methods and marketing strategies of the food industry, we still, against our better judgement, prefer to believe in the romantic image of pure and authentic food. The true situation surrounding food production is complex. It is all bound up with economies of scale, with industrial production, with the function of images in a complex system of image circulation, but also with the innovative measures adopted by industrial-looking companies that do in fact take account of the needs of animals and the environment. The true situation is carefully kept out of sight by the food industry. The one-sided, romanticized image of pure and authentic food is sustained by a tango between multinationals and consumers. This can be a barrier to the solving of the enormous problems and abuses surrounding food. The critical approach through which Parr, De Vries, Discipula and Wildschut, each in their own way, provide a counterweight to the mainstream images of food means they are actively stepping onto the dance floor.

Kim Knoppers
(b. 1976, NL) is an art historian (University of Amsterdam) and a curator at Foam. Since 2011, she has worked on exhibitions by Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin, Anne de Vries, Jan Hoek, Lorenzo Vitturi and Jan Rosseel to name but a few. Kim is founder of *Artists' Recipes*, which explores the intersection of art and food. She lives and works in Amsterdam, but also stays in Istanbul on a regular basis.

Christopher Anderson