

Sally Robinson

Cookbook Anxiety

The output is a creative project that responds to the *Cookery Collection*, one of the special collections in Leeds University library, which contains printed and archival material relating to food and cooking that dates from the late 15th Century until the present day. The project responds to selected cookbooks and printed material through still photography and moving image, especially mid 20th Century cookbooks which contain early examples of colour photography.

Research Process

This project responds to selected cookbooks and printed material from the *Cookery Collection*, through still photography and moving image. The work is inspired by mainstream images of food in mid-century cookbooks, which represents the early days of commercial colour photography. The project is particularly concerned with visual depictions of idealised lifestyles which conjure shared social fantasies, perpetuated by mainstream images and our own internalisation of them. In my response to this material, still photographs and moving image sequences explore staged scenarios and table sets which parody the lifestyles

depicted in the books, to explore the social and domestic anxieties subtly generated and communicated.

Research Insights

Cookbooks are utilitarian - they have an instructional purpose, but are also aspirational, and filled with social-class anxieties. They not only tell one how to do a thing, but also imply value judgements, sometimes directly through words, and sometimes indirectly through photographs. The reality of preparing to entertain is hugely influenced by visual culture – we try to attain the mythical ideal, and in doing so perpetuate the visual myth.

Dissemination

The output was exhibited and presented at;

MAKE GOOD (group exhibition), Leeds Arts University, Sept 2019

PEERS (group exhibition), Vrij Paleis, Amsterdam, Sept 2019

Exhibition; MAKE GOOD, Leeds Arts University, September 2019



Exhibition; PEERS, Vrij Paleis, Amsterdam, September 2019

This group exhibition opened in Amsterdam on the 19-22 Sept 2019, alongside UNSEEN International Photography Festival, held annually in Amsterdam. Although not an official programmed festival event, as an accompanying independant 'pop-up', this exhibition benefitted from the increased audience numbers due to the festival. Approximately 25,000 people visit UNSEEN festival each year, to participate in photography events and engage with emerging photographic artists'. The festival receives press coverage from publications such as *The Guardian*, and *The Art Newspaper* (links below).

