

What's for Tea? Social Action

KS3 & KS4

BALTIC



BALTIC & Travelling Gallery: *What's for Tea?* 21 February – 17 July 2022

The group exhibition *What's for Tea?* explores food production from the perspective of local and community initiatives and their contrast with global mass production. Grounded within BALTIC's history as a working flour mill opened by Rank Hovis Ltd in 1950, the exhibition explores the production and consumption of food, sustainable practices and community initiatives through the perspective of artists. The works in the exhibition invite us to consider how adapting our eating habits has the potential to combat the climate emergency.

What's for Tea? features works by Isabella Carreras, Kara Chin, Julia Heslop, Futurefarmers, David Lisser, Asunción Molinos Gordo, Turner Prize-nominees Cooking Sections and Sara Qaed.



How to use the resource

This resource has been created by BALTIC freelance artist Theresa Easton. It explores the socially engaged art practice of Cooking Sections, Futurefarmers, Asunción Molinos Gordo and the artwork of David Lisser. Both Futurefarmers and Gordo's practice demonstrate social action, while Lisser makes both physical and digital sculptures and installations which explore the future of food production.

The resource is designed as a starting point for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 to begin researching the politics of food and to encourage them to make creative, socially engaged, responses based on the suggested activities and prompts within each section: *A Creative Case for Change*, *Appetite vs Disgust* and *Identity and Place*.

What is social action?

Socially engaged practice is often associated with social action or activism because it involves people, their ideas and voices – inevitably anything created in response has a political edge. Through social action people come together to tackle an issue, improve their lives and support others.

What is a socially engaged art practice?

The socially engaged artist can use any artform and crucially involves people and communities in debate, collaboration or social interaction. Importantly, the artwork produced or created has parity with the social engagement.

When looking at a socially engaged artwork you could ask...

- What is the social issue the artist is observing?
- How is the artist observing social issues and responding to them?
- What has the artist done to provide a different way of thinking about an issue?



Socially engaged artists to research:

- Ai Weiwei
- Assemble
- Tania Bruguera
- Theaster Gates

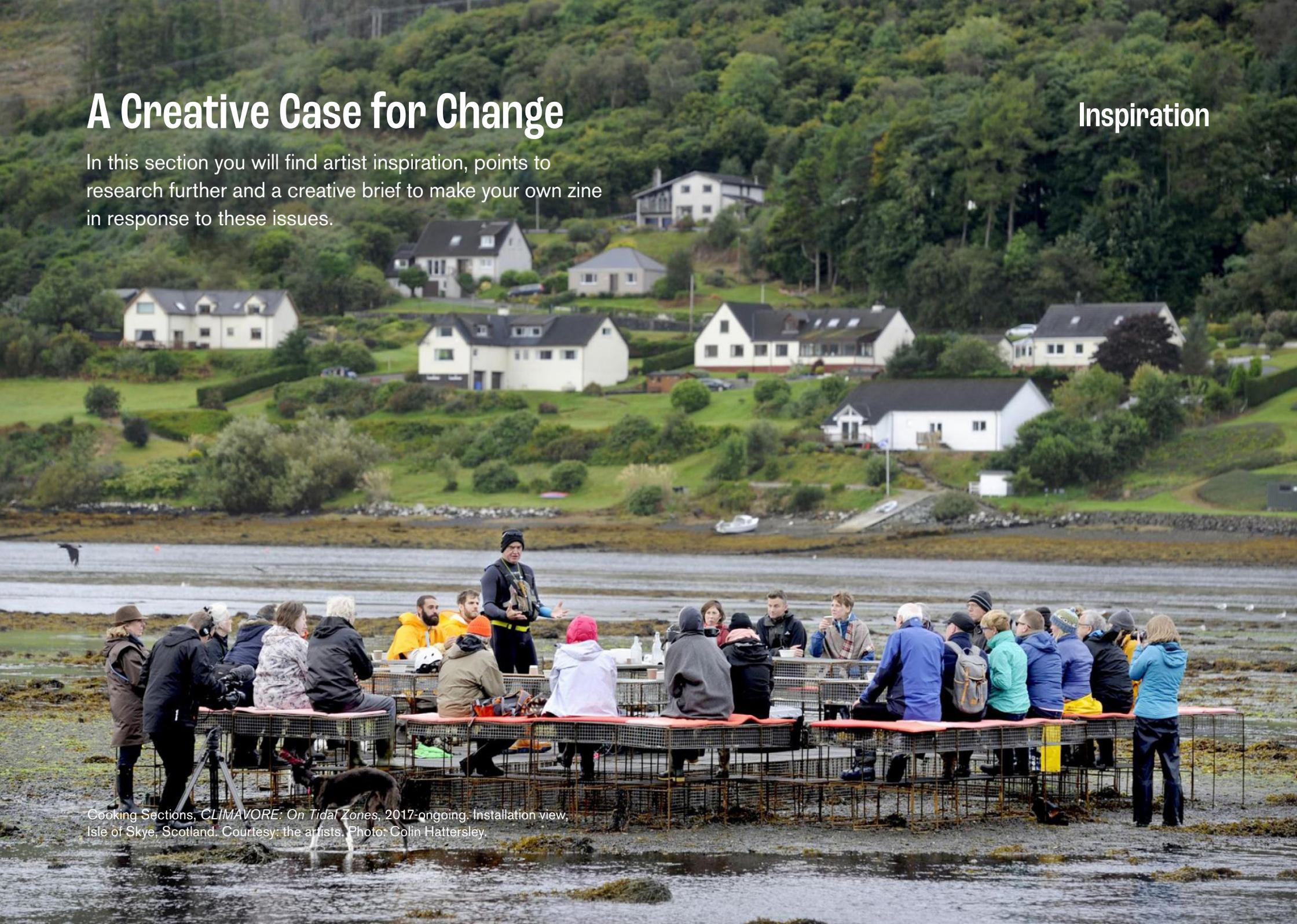
Further reading & watching:

- [The Art of Social Change: Can art be a tool for good? Where do art and social action converge?](#)
- [Art + Action: Creating a Platform for Social Justice](#)

A Creative Case for Change

Inspiration

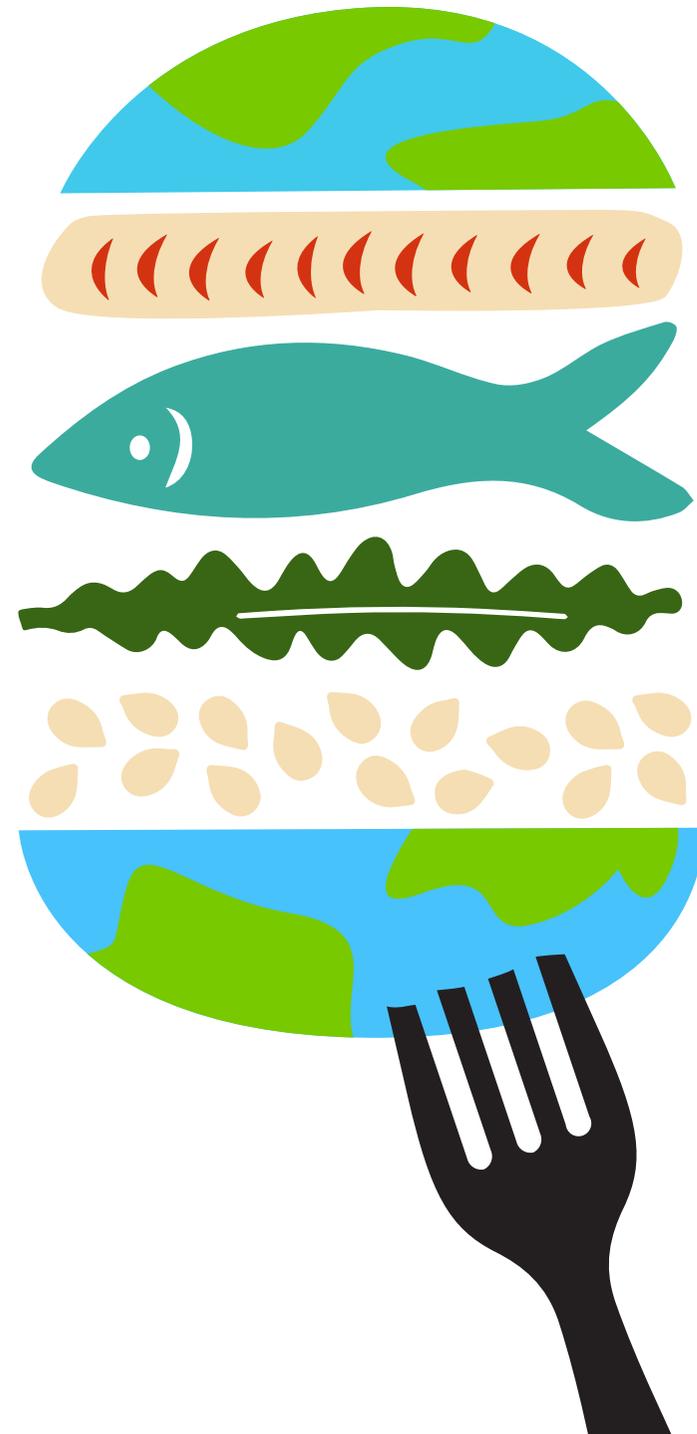
In this section you will find artist inspiration, points to research further and a creative brief to make your own zine in response to these issues.

A group of people, including children and adults, are sitting on metal cages on a beach. They are listening to a man in a dark jacket who is standing and speaking. The background shows a coastal town with white houses on a hillside, a body of water, and a forested hill. A dog is visible in the foreground.

Cooking Sections, *CLIMAVORE: On Tidal Zones*, 2017-ongoing. Installation view, Isle of Skye, Scotland. Courtesy: the artists. Photo: Colin Hattersley.

Cooking Sections

Artist duo **Cooking Sections** are exploring the future of food. Continuing their Turner Prize-nominated project *Becoming CLIMAVORE*, they invite us to consider how adapting our eating habits has the potential to directly combat the climate emergency. *CLIMAVORE* works to reimagine and transform food systems in response to the seasons of the climate emergency: drought, exhausted soils, floods or ocean pollution. Particularly focusing on ocean pollution from open-net salmon farms, Cooking Sections have worked to encourage restaurants in 21 museums across the UK to remove salmon from their menus and replace it with ingredients that improve soil and water quality, and cultivate marine habitats.



Futurefarmers

Founded in 1995, Futurefarmers are artists, designers, architects, anthropologists, writers and farmers interested in creating frameworks for exchange that catalyse moments of “not knowing”. Through socially engaged projects they create space to broaden understanding and question systems such as food policies, public transport and farming networks.

In discussions around their work, Futurefarmers refer to ‘the Commons’. The original meaning of the term ‘commons’ comes from the way communities managed land that was held ‘in common’ in medieval Europe. Along with this shared land a clear set of rules was developed by the community about how it was to be used. Over time, the term ‘commons’ has taken on several meanings. Most generally, it can be used to refer to a broad set of resources, natural and cultural, that are shared by many people. The Enclosure Acts (started in 1500s) abolished the ‘open field’ system of agriculture and common land resulting in the destruction of small farms and the agrarian way of life.



Image courtesy Futurefarmers.

Action

Through a series of Acts of Parliament, The Enclosure Acts enclosed open fields and common land, creating legal property rights to land that was previously considered 'in common'. Newcastle based Thomas Spence (1750-1814) was a self-taught radical and revolutionary and believed that The Enclosure Acts undermined place-based identity and that they enabled land to be stolen from the people whose sense of identity was deeply rooted in a specific area. Spence was a pamphleteer (a writer or publisher of pamphlets, usually referencing controversial issues) and in 1773 fought against the enclosure of the Town Moor, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The role of printed matter was crucial to distributing ideas and campaigning against injustice. Popular broadsides (a large sheet of paper printed on one side) conveyed ideas, messages, announcements and proclamations. Using traditional letterpress, broadsides were posted to walls, inside taverns and town squares. Now, contemporary messaging can include both analogue and digital methods: memes, GIFs, posters, social media posts and zines.

In November 2021 BALTIC's food and drink partner Fresh Element 'became CLIMAVORE', replacing salmon dishes from its menu with seaweed and certain shellfish which positively impact our increasingly fragile sea ecologies. BALTIC hosted Cooking Sections, local heritage grain farmers, foragers, ecology experts and academics, to exchange knowledge, spark curiosity in what we eat and build new relationships. In *What's for Tea?* Cooking Sections will continue to connect with local heritage stories which represent and reflect the contemporary aims and benefits behind *Becoming CLIMAVORE*.

Further reading:

- Newcastle based **Thomas Spence** successfully opposed the enclosure of Newcastle Town Moor. His printed pamphlets aided his campaign.
- Look at the **creative techniques** used by Extinction Rebellion to draw attention to the Climate Emergency.
- Explore the work of **Peter Kennard & Cat Picton Phillips**.
- Footballer **Marcus Rashford** campaigned for free school dinners during school holidays using the hashtag #MakeTheUTurn
- **Malala Yousafzai** is a Pakistani activist for female education.
- Ken Saro-Wiwa, a human rights activist fought environment and public health contamination resulting from the oil spill in the oil rich region of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. **Amnesty International**.

Response

Where does the food we eat come from? How far has it travelled? How is the climate emergency affected by the choice of foods we eat and how they are farmed? How do we change this?



Image courtesy Theresa Easton

Discuss:

Using pages 3 and 4, research each artist further and draw out the themes within their work. *What is their message? How are they making change? Do you agree with it? What do you feel strongly about? How are you able to share this with others?*

Think about your own school menu... Could you make a case for change?

Activity: Make a socially engaged zine

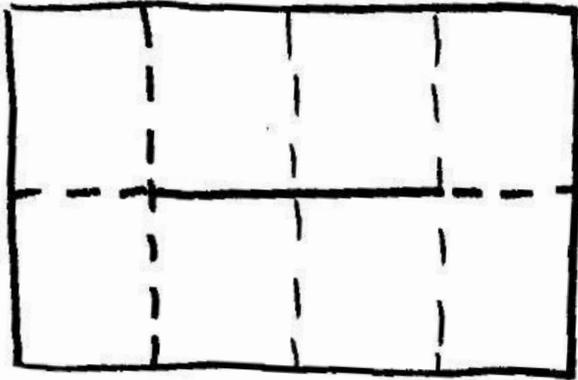
A zine is a homemade pamphlet type publication, distributed by hand. Zine making techniques could include collaging photographs from magazines or photocopying images from books; using coloured or patterned paper to create positive and negative space; writing statements and facts or making observational drawings.

Watch Theresa Easton's zine making workshop [here](#) or turn to page 9 for a visual how to guide.

- What call to action will you include? Is it personal or a collective issue?
- Where will you find out more information on the issue?
- How will you use words, materials, textures, symbols that connect with the subject matter?
- Who do you want to listen to your call to action?
- How can you use textures, patterns and decoration to create a context for the social issue you care about?
- What will you do with your artwork once it is completed?
- How will you distribute it?
- Where will you distribute it?
- Who needs to see this?
- How will you know that people have engaged with it?

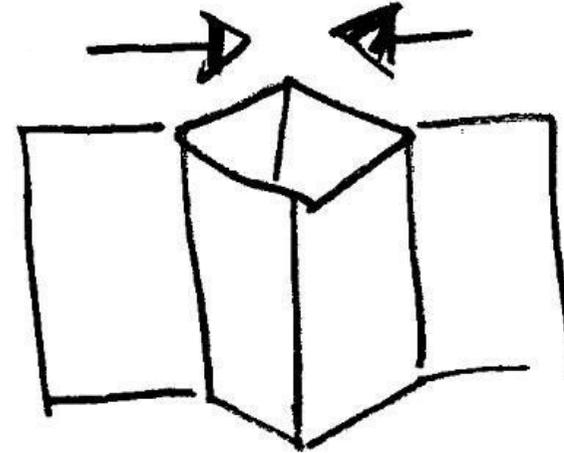
How to make a zine

1. Fold your paper in half lengthways and widthways until you have 8 sections

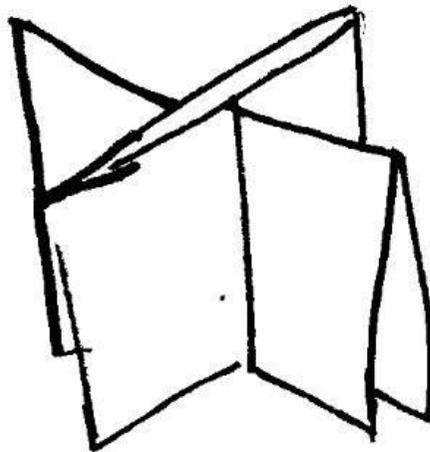


Cut the width of 2 sections in the middle

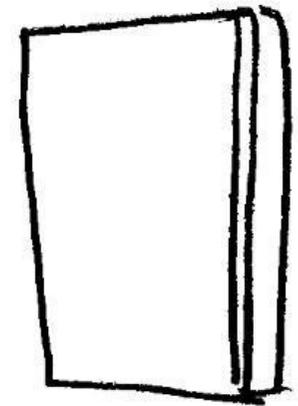
2. Open up the centre and push together



3. Flatten the pages to make a zine



4. The finished zine





David Lisser (Copyright © David Lisser 2021)

Appetite vs Disgust

In this section, you will learn about the ideas behind David Lisser's work and develop your printmaking skills.

Inspiration

Artist David Lisser's work addresses the fine line between appetite and disgust through digitally constructed realities and mimicked meat products. He considers how CGI manipulation in food photography and advertising can have a direct impact on the final product of processed food and how we can use this focus on digital food presentation to explore our inherent reactions and discomfort with ever more present augmented realities. In his *Shell Series*, Lisser uses extinct carnivorous molluscs reimagined as a vehicle for cellular agriculture; the exoskeleton is re-seeded with live meat tissue to form hybrid forms. These digital works prompt questions about advertising and consumer demands.

"I think a lot about the future and I make both physical and digital sculptures and installations that explore our hopes and fears for tomorrow. My work playfully prods at our entanglement with technology and our relationship with food, and how we live in an unpredictable world."

David Lisser

Did you know?:

BALTIC was originally a working flour mill opened in 1950 by Rank Hovis. Joseph Rank encouraged research into crustacea farming, seed and cereal production and wheat hybrids. He also pioneered protein production from starch. In 1984 the Company established a joint venture with ICI known as Marlow Foods which created the meat substitute product Quorn.

Response

Where does the food we eat come from? How far has it travelled? How is the climate emergency affected by the choice of foods we eat and how they are farmed? How do we change this?



Activity: Collecting and developing Printmaking techniques

- Consider how food is presented to us as consumers and how it has changed over time. *Does social media have a part to play in this?*
- Source food adverts, use food packaging, draw detailed studies of food products
- Using collage techniques, juxtapose objects and textures to create a Surrealist world of food. Learn more about the Surrealist art movement [here](#).
- Use printmaking techniques to layer images of food and alter representations

Watch Theresa Easton's Skills Share video on developing printmaking techniques [here](#).

Within the video you will learn:

- How to make monotypes including making ink transparent (beginning to 12.35 minutes)
- How to introduce texture to your prints (12.39 minutes)
- How to make relief prints (22.35 minutes to end)

Further resources:

Look at the work by artist **Joseph Cornell** in particular his Wanderlust boxes.

Pakui Hardware: *Virtual Care* imaging the role of healthcare in the future.

Anselm Kiefer: use of unorthodox materials such as: straw, ash, clay, lead, and shellac.

BBC Science '[The Future of Food](#)'

Natural History Museum [Extraordinary Foods of the Future](#)

Food Tank [Edible Food Packaging](#)

Structure of the [UK's agricultural industries](#)

Identity and Place

In this section, you will learn more about the work of Asunción Molinos Gordo and Futurefarmers' *Seed Journey* to use as research to develop visual journaling: a process that involves exploring concepts, ideas, and thoughts visually in order to understand and create personal meaning.

Inspiration

Asunción Molinos Gordo's work focuses on 'contemporary peasantry' considering the figure of the small or medium-scale farmer not merely as food producer but as cultural agent, responsible for both perpetuating traditional knowledge and for generating new expertise to meet current challenges. Gordo explores how contemporary agricultural policies affect the economic and cultural role of the farmer. Gordo uses interviews and research to form the basis of much of her work. She describes herself as a visual artist and researcher.

Image courtesy Asunción Molinos Gordo.



Futurefarmers acknowledge cultures through seed journeys, the sharing and collecting of stories and seeds and through meeting different farmers. A rotating crew of artists, anthropologists, biologists, bakers, activists, sailors and farmers join the journey and share their findings at host institutions along the route from small harbours to large ports from barns to museums (contemporary art, natural history and maritime) to social centres. Travelling

on RS 10 Christiania, a wooden rescue sailboat designed in 1895 by renowned shipwright Colin Archer, the collective aim is to return the seeds back to where they were originally domesticated. Their ambitious project ***Seed Journey*** (2016-17) explores questions of seed diversity, migration and time travel through the journey of a 500 year old grain that was found by archaeologists in a church in Pajottenland, Belgium in 2015.



Image courtesy Futurefarmers.

Response

What is in your locality? What matters to you? What do you see on your journey? What gives this place an identity? What is beyond your locality?



Watch the following videos about Futurefarmers their *Seed Journey* project:

YouTube - **Artes Mundi 7: Amy Franceschini / Futurefarmers**

Vimeo - **Amy Franceschini, *Flatbread Society Seed Journey, 2016***

Now imagine and document the journey these seeds may have travelled through from Istanbul, Turkey to Oslo, Norway and create visual representations of this.

Further resources:

Abel Rodríguez documents his time growing up in the Colombian rainforest.

Welfare State International & contemporary rituals.

Susan Hiller *Witness* makes links between communication (visual and oral) and knowledge.

Visual Journaling

Consider your local area and the journeys that you have taken around it. Follow these prompts to collect ephemera, written or printed matters that can be used to make visual representations of your journey within a sketchbook. Your sketchbook could be a physical version or a digital one.

- Gather images, maps, seed packets, food packaging, leaflets and bus tickets.
- Make drawings and collect words that reflect places and spaces along the journey.
- Write your ideas down and then play with words, shapes, and figures.
- Experiment with capturing sound on a journey and creating a soundscape composition.
- Explore and research the food outlets specific to places that you pass.
- Embed food into your journal. Ink and print vegetable tops connected to your chosen country. Experiment and dye paper with spices, plants and herbs.
- Consider how you will present each journal – you could host an exhibition, or present as a group crit.



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