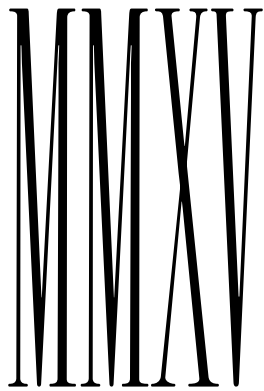


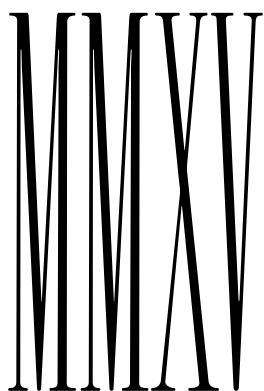
RINGIER



ANNUAL REPORT

RINGIER

A WORK BY
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I. INSIDE / OUTSIDE — *soaking pig intestines*



CALLIGRAPHY OF THE MARINADE

Sausage production at its finest, is the outcome of efficient butchery. With its magic residing in the rapidity of material transformation, the process flaunts the atomic flexibility and plastic powers of meat. To set things in disorder – here, to practice a ritual realignment of animal parts – and to rearrange them for gastronomic pleasure is a wickedly tactical manoeuvre. Mass production is a majestic art in all industry, but the affair of *making-sausage* is scaffolded by the analogue skill of many limbs and larynxes: the human hand with all its hot-blooded dexterity is the essential tool, practicing a politics with every stylised flash of the skin.

The first documented recording of the production of sausages is found in *The Odyssey*, where fleeting reference to ‘goat casings filled with fat and blood’ is made. The principles of butchery are necessarily

ancient: its imagery is possessed with spirit and entangled in a basic morphology of substances. If colours are to be considered signs, which indicate the essence of things and not their appearance, then butchery – somewhat ironically – is still red and living.

The beginning stages of sausage production are alchemic and methodical, yet tinged with an irrepressible eroticism. Mince, pulse, grind: these actioning words lie on the more filthy end of a carnal vocabulary spectrum. And of course there is all the comedy of sexual impropriety, of wetness, substance abuse and rapid material transformation. The sausage metamorphoses: from soft, pulpy pinkness to repeating geometric upright! Libidinous innuendo is impossible to neglect.

Materially, sausage matter has its origins in blood; given the pace of production, this blood is spread with an alarming casualness. Blood on buckets acquires the baked-on skin of ceramic glaze, a kind of cosmetic make-upping, which blankets appliance and appendage alike. Blood is momentarily isolated from visual horror and instead blooms in floral blushes against white rubber boots and aprons; mixing with water on the floor blood streams with biblical fervour; in vast quantities it is poured, recalling arterial flow as it makes a full metaphorical rotation of life's absurdly episodic wheel. The sheer bloodiness of it all is bound by a flourish of perversity, an expressive urgency and impossible distortion of volumes. There is both comedy and hubris.

So unlike the maggoty distress of mince (the hamburger is produced alongside), the sausage is preserved galvanic substance. Equipped with vitality from its sanguine humours, the sausage represents the strength of molecular density. Following liquid comes the addition of powders, minerals, gels and semi-solids. The constituent parts – herbs, spices, milk, pickles, bread, essence-of-smoke – are as ingredients a meaningful compendium of gustatory images. The associations are of fortitude but the question of morality is rickety. The sausage is a confusion of speeds, a paradox of raw and cooked: matter is primal, but everything is soft in a kind of quasi-rawness before domestic cooking neutralises anxiety.

The good-natured assumption would be towards quality but there is an ectoplasmic spookiness in imagining the sausage's hidden layers – what information has been dimensionally compromised, flat-packed, *blended* into uniform beige? Edible matter is ushered into a state where any chopping, decorating, storing, *edifying* impulses are stripped out: Sausage meat as a blend is an abbreviated version of consumables with

once rigid and definable outlines. And to blend is to physically destroy all pictures, all geometric certainties and thus re-plot with a sexy kind of ambiguousness. In slimy form there is mystery! Like the illusionist's puff of smoke or the compression of a zipped file, the information is hidden away, made discrete and repackaged. We encounter a condition of matter that is neither solid nor liquid, but curiously between the two.

The outlines of the object frustrate too. As a fluffy mash, liberation and amorphous *looseness* are granted: through paste's gagging suction, all usual written limits are overridden. Before being processed into skins (the link is the defiantly ubiquitous image of sausage distribution), this substance defies geometric memory as puffy pillows of pinkness. There is a curious friction between the absurdly cloud-like dough of the meat and the obstinate sterility of the steel trays: the motifs arise from binary ontological categories, but material responsibility has been oddly queered by their pairing. There is an imprudent beauty in the stillness. What could be more intolerable to capitalism than this attitude of relaxation?

And so the primary action of sausage making is to reactivate denatured protein as distributable product. Just as the final image, the production process is one of methodical links, of specifically tied steps of action. This is an industry of carefully stitched-together moments of labour and lethargy. Whilst some things steam, smoke or boil, others are pressed, filled and coiled. Temperature and pressure move in equilibrium for the giving and receiving of form. Like the metabolising or stimulating functions of the liver and testicles or the lachrymal excess of the eyeball, the image here is one of the languid and lascivious in constant holistic interchange.

It is an incredulous fact of sausage making that the intestines so meticulously cleaned after extraction from the pig are refilled with the same flesh, which once held them in place. This perfectly balanced and morbidly gleeful algorithm of filling and exhaustion offers specific and complex dialogue between content and structure. En route to completion, sausages are eccentric shells that expose their interiors to the outside. Like some weird leftover condom or other absurdist sexual prophylactic, sterilised intestinal casings are inflated back into lobed glandular organs. The ethereal and the solid meet again and the sausage's relationship to distinct mental and physical frameworks allows the negative work of plastic destruction to be suddenly undone. The skin is the facilitator of regular form.

Perhaps this is where the lightest intellectual pleasure lies: there is great decorative value in the gesture of every sausage link. Graphically optimistic, sausages as a group are rickety but rigorously composed. Like good little soldiers, these are units of speedy mechanised repetition. The motion is a constant genial flow of one thing following another: bricks atop a wall, vertical pages in a book – the form is one of a type of serialised intention connected to networked methods of distribution. As a visual approximation of connectivity, of constant knots being tied, the link is a fragile if hilarious analogy for a greater picture of market consumption. The rhythms of making are paced with the rhythms of eating and the casual customer is an implicit protagonist in the process.

And being a networked economy, this process of course moves in cycles back to an eventual hyper-cleanliness. Between batches, flavours and specifications, the factory undergoes a cleaning process, which sees it entirely covered in a snow of antibacterial foam. The whiteness is a smug cleanser of pathology's mad redness. Binary models become fluid, dent one another, and become flexible. With animals becoming form and form masquerading as spirit, the sausage might be thought to be some bastard ontological refugee of its process. The sausage is not something that is hotly living, but it has neither the inertia of a stone. And as only a fragment of a larger tide pool of economics, these pinkly innocent forms are complexly stranded between animate and inanimate status. They are a wonderfully greasy metaphor.







V. PINK CLOUDS — *blending the sausage meat*



VI. STYLIZED SKINS — *multiple hands produce a sausage link*

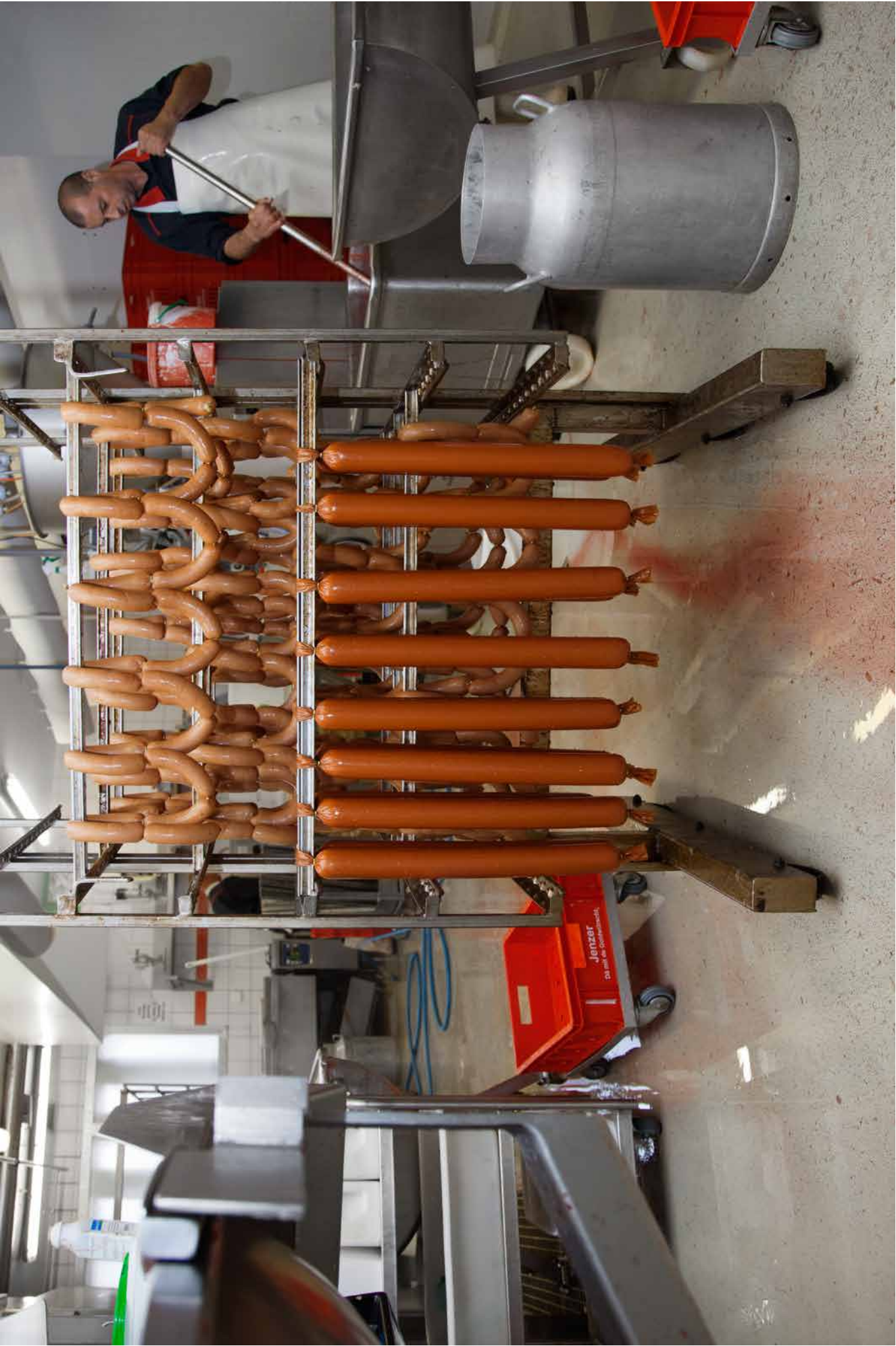


VII. A PLASTIC GLAZE — *pigs blood on bucket*

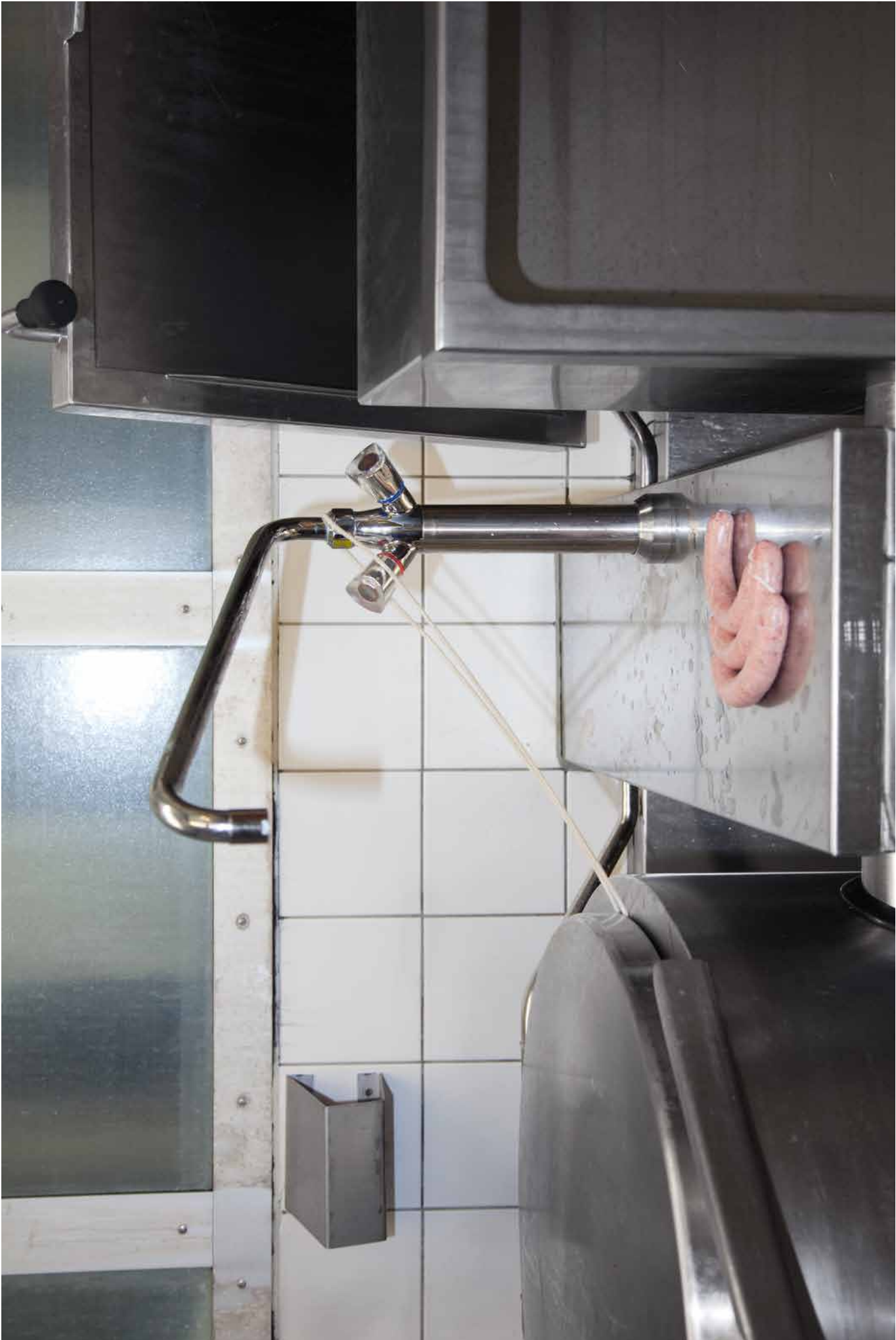








XI. GOOD SOLDIERS — *sausage links hot and wet from the steam oven*











VERWURSTEN

Beatrix Ruf in conversation with Helen Marten

BR: How did you come across the idea and image of the 'Wurst'?

HM: I was thinking about the context of an Annual Report and specifically one that is rooted in a company whose output is so distinctly tied to the processes of publishing and distribution. For me, the enigma of a sausage as both a graphic image and a signifier of industrial process is a beautiful analogy of how information or materiality is contained (and equally dispersed) within the mechanics of a larger organ of business and power. The processes of publishing and sausage making are defined by similar thresholds and gradients: substance, essence, vibrations and numbers are part of the intrinsic rules and transcendental ideals. In short, 'making sausage' could be a generalised descriptive metaphor for creating content both gathered and disseminated via divergent contexts. As with a sausage, the global face of a corporation extends a legible silhouette. It distributes and packages its output with a uniform skin, but the internal contents are radically divergent. The idea is that an already branded material might be receptive to tangential or absurdist projections, and so this project is not really a statement or an enunciation, but a truly pleasurable extrapolation of process and materiality.

BR: Dieter Roth used sausages in many ways in his oeuvre for multiples, collages, processes in general. In the 1960's he used the image and the act of 'verwurst' in his *Literaturwurst* series: using literature and newspapers alike, he transformed, digested – 'verwurstete' – periodicals including *Der Spiegel*, *Die Welt*, *Neue Welt*; the literature of Martin Walser and an entire volume of Hegel's philosophy were also transformed. 'Verwurst' evokes quite negative sounds, associating the process of making Wurst with an equalizing and negating process of difference or actual content. But of course with Roth it is also associated with literature, philosophy and poetry as basic daily 'food'. Are you referencing these works?

HM: I love these works so yes of course there is an element of reference. Roth's Wursts are physical signifiers literally bristling with content, but as images they are wonderfully treacherous. The only concrete indication of ingredients is the appliquéd title pages, which in themselves are parasitical given their oblique displacement. Material in the raw hovers between traditional binaries: it is not immediately legible as form, but suggests a concentration of 'flavour'; the matter is homogenized but pliable so new form is imaginable; material *itself* confers quality so if the ingredients as per Roth's Wursts are pre-loaded with content then there exists alongside an implicit tautology of attitudes and irony. If you imagine literature as a potent vehicle for disseminating broad sociological imaginings, then Roth's model for consumption is riddled with anagram and linguistic infidelity. His implicit human algorithm – you're hungry you eat, you're full you shit – operates metaphorically at simultaneous micro- and macroscopic levels. Hegel, for example, becomes a physical ingredient, but the significance of his words also acts as a metaphor for process. His infamous dualisms (subject/object; mind/body etc.) are put into a comedy of physical action, so his written philosophizing of integration without reduction or elimination of supposed contradictory factors is mirrored by the very nature of making-sausage. Hegel speaks profoundly about 'spirit' and what could be a more appropriate cipher than the sausage?!

BR: With this project you have created an extremely beautiful and carefully made book with photographs, even with one tipped in. It evokes an almost lost tradition of book making whilst exploiting a rather

alienating if not repelling process in industrial sausage making. Can you talk a bit more about your ideas of culture/the cultured, the power of images and the endless transformation of materiality in information, civilization and life?

HM: I wanted the graphic format of the book to have the same type of material fluctuations as encountered in the sausage making process. In both, there is constant reference to both literal and metaphorical operations: transparency, texture, typography and binding. Given the classical monograph format, there is present a kind of gorgeous nudity, which in turn is undone in part by the referential scrambling towards art history and sociology. I wanted a strange mythologizing to happen, but one which allowed for an articulation of logical and illogical contexts as equal references. Photographs are the most economic way of conveying or flattening image. As we know, text parasitizes the photograph, but a (known) image extracted from the public realm is invariably attached to an invisible text, or set of linguistic propositions that float invisibly around it. The collision of the graphic format of this Annual Report alongside my text and photographs builds on these ideas of image distribution. The sausage process itself unfolds against a larger semantic environment: the photographs here describe known images and actions, but they can also be extracted to exist as single frames or more subjective 'notations'. I like the idea that both the sausage process and the graphic format make reference to recognizable social and architectural elements, but they also embrace the movements, events and psyches of very individual territories. There is a wonderfully fragile gap between observation and experience, and located within this complex knot are the inevitable components of structure and image, continually referring to one another and their capacity for representation.

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