

Rot, noun : decomposition of an organic body, under the action of biological factors (fungi, bacteria) completely modifying its appearance and composition.

We all know that feeling of disgust when we open our fridge and discover the filth of a rotten fruit covered in its repulsive white blanket. This visceral aversion appears suddenly and transforms our face into one of the most recognizable human expressions. Our nose wrinkles and our lips pull up. This emotion of disgust is expressed in the same way by everyone, regardless of culture. There is what we call “associative” disgust and “moral” disgust which respond to mechanisms similar to physical disgust. These disgusts with which we grow up are part of our identity; and they establish taste boundaries which in turn depend on our cultural boundaries. We pick up the object of disgust with our fingertips and hasten to throw it in the trash. This experience of finding rot in the fridge is the most common one, rot is everywhere around us and even within us. We try to escape it but the fact is that we live with it all the time. The disgust caused by people facing rot, is what I am gonna talk about in this publication.

Decomposition

putrefaction

degradation

fermentation

desintegration

the words that accompany rot are **limitless**.

Being intrinsically linked to the process of rotting, these terms will also appear in this publication. Although they are all associated with precise stages and chemical states, they are also all present in the development of rot.

There are different types of rot, each associated with specific environmental conditions and types of organic matter. Three types of microorganisms play a role in this rot : there are molds and yeasts, which are microscopic fungi, and there are bacteria. We breathe these spooky small beings, we ingest them so regularly in our world without us seeing it. It is even thanks to these microbes that we owe the taste refinement of our favorite foods : bread, cheese, meat, wine and other wonders. We enjoy these foods without realizing that they are inhabited by these microorganisms skillfully controlled by humans.

I spend a lot of time in the countryside in the middle of France where the relationship with rot is different, as in every rural environment. We do not rush to throw away the decomposed and damaged fruits but on the contrary we collect them to make jam and other wonders. Rot is part of the daily rural scenery. The rotting wooden doors of old abandoned barns blend into the landscape. Dead leaves and fallen branches create a magnificent carpet that gradually rots. One day, I started photographing the many rotting fruits, vegetables and plants that were sleeping in my garden. I collected them and kept them for several days as objects of study. Their rapid and drastic transformation impressed me, their changing colors fascinated me and their texture intrigued me. I therefore developed a new curiosity for rot, which led me to go beyond my initial disgust for rot and decomposition; and to research the processes of these changes that I was observing. I realized that rot raised not only biological but also anthropological and artistic questions.

How is rot perceived in our society and to what extent does rot say something about our human condition ?

To answer this question, I will talk about the confrontation between the vision we have of rot as an end associated with death and the vision of renewal and life that emerges from rot. I will also dig into the aesthetics of rot and its triviality. This approach will also account for artists' timeless fascination with rot and how they choose to represent it.

Rot disgusts humans.

But the poems, photographs, sculptures, installations and other works of art that will appear in this publication, participate in the hope that I have to bring to the reader a certain knowledge, a momentary experience, an awakening perhaps to the richness and possible beauty of rot in all its forms. Beauty sometimes hides in ugliness before moving us and revealing its assets. And above all, whatever we think, rot is essential to our life. Let us begin this journey into the heart of rot.



Fig 1. Personal photography of my fridge

From hour to hour, we rot and rot...

William Shakespeare

The relationship to rot is religious. In the Middle Ages, rot and its smell was associated with the devil and witchcraft. This foul smell represented death and impurity. Rot was seen as a moral and religious problem endangering the transcendence of Man and the decomposed body was perceived as emptied of its sacred substance and soul. Putrefaction was directly linked to transcendence because bodies affected by rot were seen as sinners abandoned by God.

*"We must respond to the first argument, that Christ not being subject to sin, was subject neither to death nor to dissolution; yet he willingly endured death for the sake of our salvation, for the reasons we have given. But if his body had rotted or turned to dust, this act would have rather been detrimental to man's salvation, since it would have been believed that divine virtue was not in him."*¹

Beyond the religious vision, the relationship to putrefaction is also cultural. It is based on systems of thoughts and beliefs that relate to the concept of death. Indeed, this process of decay reminds us of the fragility of human life and its ephemeral state. In art, still lifes and vanitas² constantly remind us of this notion of time passing and of our certain finitude. Indeed, time always reminds us of its supremacy over all things. The effects of time are inevitable and decomposition will always affect objects, materials, and even memories.

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1 Saint Thomas Aquinas, 'Summa theologica', Tertia Pars, quaest. LI, art. III.

2 Still life is a term describing an artistic genre emerging in the 16th century in the Netherlands, representing inanimate things like typical commonplace objects that can be either natural, such as fruits, flowers, dead animals, shells or either human-made such as vessels, books, jewelry, coins. Those paintings often aim to represent the ephemerality of these pleasures. Vanitas are also representations of the 16th and 17th century that remind the viewers of the fragility of life, depicting most of the time a skull, candles, an hourglass, a soap bubble and wilted flowers.



Fig 2. *Impermanence_Untitled*, David Hyun, Seung-Hwan Oh, 2013

With his series entitled «Impermanence», Seung-Hwan Oh³ joins this idea that all matter is one day affected by time, to even life itself captured by these photographs. The photographer causes this image alteration by following a precise process in which bacteria work their magic. First, he implants homegrown bacterias on his films and then ensures that they stay wet for months, sometimes years. These almost no longer visible photographs are the astonishing result of the power of decay.

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3 Seung-Hwan Oh is a Korean artist born and raised in Seoul who then moved to New York to study film and photography. As a microbiologist, he blends science and art in order to offer very experimental photography.

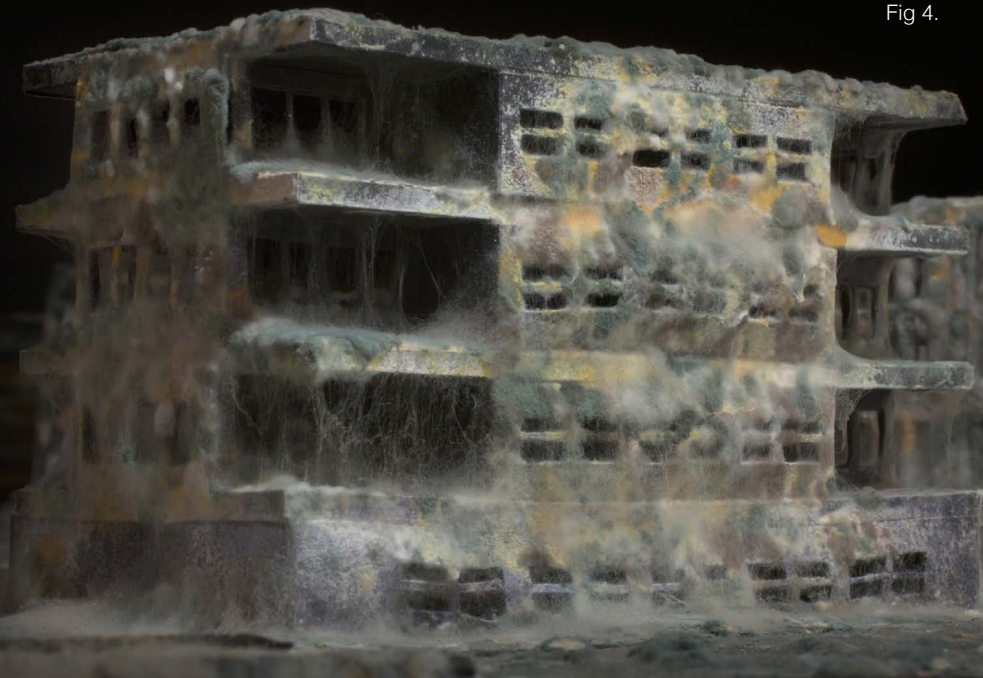
I myself have experienced these memories put to the test of time one day, as I found old photographs of my parents. Like a treasure, I hastened to look at them then surprise took hold of me when I saw these large colored spots covering almost the entire surface of the photos. They had remained in this cardboard envelope for years and had suffered the consequences of humidity and time. I tried my best to detect the image that was hidden behind it and that appeared in certain places. These memories were now mixed with these strange and beautiful stains of rot, telling another story. From now on it was no longer just the discovery of the young faces of my parents but also the time that passed on them and on these photos. These photographed moments were now difficult to read.

Fig 3. Personal archive of photographs









The process of rot that we encounter every day also takes us back to our mortal destiny. In this way, the disgust we feel for rot is anthropological. Like the photographs of my parents, all things are destined to die and decay, this degradation of the flesh against the test of time is a constant reminder of Memento Mori. When we see food or an animal decomposing, we witness the spectacle of our own fate. But, this repulsion is only the fear of what awaits us.

The Italian artist Daniele Del Nero⁴ also questions our future and the one of the planet, subject to the time passing. His series entitled *After Effects*, produced in 2012 (Fig 4 and 5), is the assembly of models made of black paper then sprinkled with flour and stored in Plexiglas boxes. He lets time do the work. Little by little, mold takes over these buildings which then creates post apocalyptic landscapes. The result is astonishing and confronts us with the fate of the Earth and the disappearance of all things. I always found it interesting when artists let nature take control of their work and allow surprises to happen.

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4 Daniele Del Nero is an Italian designer with a degree in «Building Engineering/Architecture», Master in «Movie Design», and studies of «Art direction and Visual Communication».

Fig 5.



But if the sight of photographs, objects or architecture in decomposition is hard to see and accept, confronting the decomposition of a living being like us is another suffering. The sight of a body, human or animal, becoming a carcass is a hardship of another magnitude.

The Groundhog

In June, amid the golden fields,
I saw a groundhog lying dead.
Dead lay he; my senses shook,
And mind outshot our naked frailty.

There lowly in the vigorous summer
His form began its senseless change,
And made my senses waver dim
Seeing nature ferocious in him.

Inspecting close his maggots' might
And seething cauldron of his being,
Half with loathing, half with a strange love,
I poked him with an angry stick.

The fever arose, became a flame
And Vigour circumscribed the skies,
Immense energy in the sun,
And through my frame a sunless trembling.

My stick had done nor good nor harm.
Then stood I silent in the day
Watching the object, as before;
And kept my reverence for knowledge

Trying for control, to be still,
To quell the passion of the blood;
Until I had bent down on my knees
Praying for joy in the sight of decay.

And so I left; and I returned
In Autumn strict of eye, to see
The sap gone out of the groundhog,
But the bony sodden hulk remained

But the year had lost its meaning,
And in intellectual chains
I lost both love and loathing,
Mured up in the wall of wisdom.

Another summer took the fields again
Massive and burning, full of life,
But when I chanced upon the spot
There was only a little hair left,

And bones bleaching in the sunlight
Beautiful as architecture;
I watched them like a geometer,
And cut a walking stick from a birch.

It has been three years, now.
There is no sign of the groundhog.
I stood there in the whirling summer,
My hand capped a withered heart,
And thought of China and of Greece,
Of Alexander in his tent;
Of Montaigne in his tower,
Of Saint Theresa in her wild lament.

In this poem, a little boy faces death for the first time. Over the months, he will witness the transformation of the groundhog due to its decomposition. At the first encounter, the corpse is covered in maggots. At the last meeting, there was not even a trace of the dead animal. Its decomposition caused it to disappear entirely. We also notice an evolution in the boy's acceptance of death. We can draw a parallel between this description of the different stages of decay made by Richard Eberhart with another poem which is also a meeting with a carcass but more as a momentary experience than visits over time. It is the famous poem "Une Charogne" written by Charles Baudelaire. While the animal disappears completely in the last poem, Baudelaire chooses another escape for his carcass.

A Carcass

My love, do you recall the object which we saw,
That fair, sweet, summer morn!
At a turn in the path a foul carcass
On a gravel strewn bed,

Its legs raised in the air, like a lustful woman,
Burning and dripping with poisons,
Displayed in a shameless, nonchalant way
Its belly, swollen with gases.

The sun shone down upon that putrescence,
As if to roast it to a turn,
And to give back a hundredfold to great Nature
The elements she had combined;

And the sky was watching that superb cadaver
Blossom like a flower.
So frightful was the stench that you believed
You'd faint away upon the grass.

The blow-flies were buzzing round that putrid belly,
From which came forth black battalions
Of maggots, which oozed out like a heavy liquid
All along those living tatters.

All this was descending and rising like a wave,
Or poured out with a crackling sound;
One would have said the body, swollen with a vague breath,
Lived by multiplication.

And this world gave forth singular music,
Like running water or the wind,
Or the grain that winnowers with a rhythmic motion
Shake in their winnowing baskets.

The forms disappeared and were no more than a dream,
A sketch that slowly falls
Upon the forgotten canvas, that the artist
Completes from memory alone.

Crouched behind the boulders, an anxious dog
Watched us with angry eye,
Waiting for the moment to take back from the carcass
The morsel he had left.

– And yet you will be like this corruption,
Like this horrible infection,
Star of my eyes, sunlight of my being,
You, my angel and my passion!

Yes! thus will you be, queen of the Graces,
After the last sacraments,
When you go beneath grass and luxuriant flowers,
To molder among the bones of the dead.

Then, O my beauty! say to the worms who will
Devour you with kisses,
That I have kept the form and the divine essence
Of my decomposed love!

This poem evokes a walk by the poet and his beloved, Jeanne Duval, during which they come across the corpse of a decomposing animal. In this poem, Baudelaire transforms the natural ugliness of putrefaction into an emerging and eternal beauty. Through this reflection on death, the author ultimately offers us a rebirth of life. All the morbid terms and the meticulous description that Baudelaire offers us only reinforce the idea that this filthy carcass is anchored in the cycle of nature and life. Thus, this unpleasant and disturbing scene suddenly becomes a source of life. And while speaking of this carrion, he pays homage to his beloved. She will herself become a carrion and produce a Memento Mori announcing the decomposition of their love. However, in Baudelaire's poem, the carcass will continue to live through art and the poet. This poem interests me because it proposes a break between the vision of death and rebirth through putrefaction. Baudelaire goes beyond this macabre vision and invites us to rethink rot as life which feeds on death.

Like Baudelaire, I like the idea of rethinking rot not as the end of things but as a transition between life, death and life again. For me, rot and decay do not mark the end of living things but rather the beginning of a natural process that recreates life from death. During my research, I was fascinated to discover that these little beings like molds, yeasts and bacteria that can be seen as enemies that urgently need to be exterminated are in fact essential to all kinds of life.

We see these deformed spots spreading little by little on our food and these invasions of cottony colonies and we take it upon ourselves to eradicate them at all costs without knowing that these microorganisms which frighten us are tiny but essential agents in the great recycling of living matter. Without them, the earth would be overwhelmed with dead matter. The disgust and repulsion felt sometimes is societal and historical

and yet, without rot there would be no cycle of life. The invisible work of these tiny actors has large-scale consequences on the ecosystem and the natural renewal of living matter.

In 2011, an experiment carried out by Anglo-Saxon scientists showed the dimensions that rot can take and the inevitable fact that these microorganisms can colonize everything under the right conditions. This experiment carried out in the Edinburgh Zoo is called Rot Box which reproduces a kitchen and a garden confined in an airtight glass cube. This two-month experiment answers the question of what would happen if we allowed the rotting process to continue. Many cameras were set up to capture the performance of this evolving decomposition as we can see in the documentary *After Life: The Strange Science of Decay*. Foodstuffs were the first to suffer from decomposers. Decomposers also buried a dead rat in only twelve hours and decomposed an entire pig into a carcass. The pig ends up “flying” thanks to the flies that originated from the larvae which consumed the meat earlier. This experience shows all the magic of these tiny agents with immense powers. The aesthetic of decay here is not stylized as in Baudelaire’s poems but on the contrary it is shown at its most crude and repulsive to sight and smell, as if nature were artistic in his work of death. Which makes nature an admirable force both in its action of regeneration and in its action of disintegration.

The apprehension towards microorganisms should change because we won't get rid of them so easily. Indeed, these microorganisms, in particular bacteria, are the first form of life on Earth. Bacteria have resisted and evolved through time for millions of years, through all possible climates and natural disasters. Bacteria have always been present, they are the dominant life form on the planet and although they are considered a deadly enemy or source of disease, their reign is limitless. As for the bacteria in us called intestinal microbiota, they protect our body against infections and help us digest. More than our ancestors, they should be seen as our best friends. From large ecosystems to the inside of our bodies, bacteria play their role in sustainable development. On the other hand, mold and yeast can indeed represent a danger in certain situations. But they are also part of these microscopic actors who do good for the Earth, and their activity is quite fascinating. These microscopic fungi are multicellular living beings like us and once multiplied, they are visible to the naked eye. They are called cottony, woolly, velvety, powdery colonies... There are countless adjectives to describe mold and its intriguing texture. These colonies need oxygen, while humidity and light encourages them to reproduce. They are constantly looking for a "planet" to colonize. For example when these fungi develop on a fruit, they form a colony which consumes all the fruit. Once the fruit is consumed, the fungi release spores into the air which will travel and look for another material to implant like small seeds which then flower and form a threatening white, green or black layer... Indeed, the hues of rot are varied and unique. The colors of molds linked to their spores are numerous and tell us about the states of living organisms but also about the toxicity of the mold in question. While white mold is still only an infant and therefore not dangerous, black mold is toxic to humans. The fascinating thing isn't the infinite variety of colors that mold has but that its pigments that act as defense mechanisms. Beyond certain molds that are dangerous to health because of

their toxicity, it is important to know that the combined action of microorganisms and decomposer animals are a source of renewal and life. This surprising discovery calls Memento Mori into question,

I now prefer Memento Vivere.

Damned analyzers, abominable race,
Hyenas following the procession
To dig up the body;
Will you soon have uncapped the beers,
To measure our bones and weigh our dust;
Let the dead sleep!

My masters, do you know, who could have said it?
What we feel when the saw with its teeth tears
Our throbbing shreds.
Do you know if death is not another life,
And if when their remains at the grave are delighted
Are the ancestors happy?

Ah! you come to search with your profane nails
Our tombs violated, to take our skulls,
You are very bold.
Do you not fear that one fine day, pale and wan,
A deceased person rises and says to you: Anathema!
As I tell you.

So you imagine, in this rottenness,
Uncover the secrets of mother nature
What about God's work?
It is not through the body that we can understand the soul.
The body is only the altar, the genius is the flame;
You put out the fire!

O my Children Jesus! O my brown Madonnas!
O you who owe me your freshest crowns,
Saints of paradise!
The scientists roll my skull on the earth,
And you suffer this without taking the thunder,
Without hitting those damn people!

Théophile Gautier also suggests that death is only the passage to life by saying “Do you know if death is not another life, And if when their remains at the grave are delighted Are the ancestors happy?”.

In the 19th century particularly, rot became an object of fascination. By its ambiguity between life and death, putrefaction became a source of interest for artists because it triggers a process of representation which generates this strong emotion. In opposition to the ancients, 19th century artists saw in it an inspiring beauty. The fascination that rot arouses on artists is due to its ambivalence and its symbolism. Indeed, rot testifies to the transformation of the world and says a lot about us. An aesthetic of mold then appeared. Already Baudelaire, with the last stanza of his poem "Une Charogne", illustrates the power of art which would restore to rot its lost transcendence. This morbid sublimation of rot was also represented in the 20th century when Salvador Dali explored this theme and painted L'âne pourri in 1928.

«Nothing can convince me that this cruel rot of the donkey is anything other than the blinding and hard reflection of new precious stones».

Salvador Dali

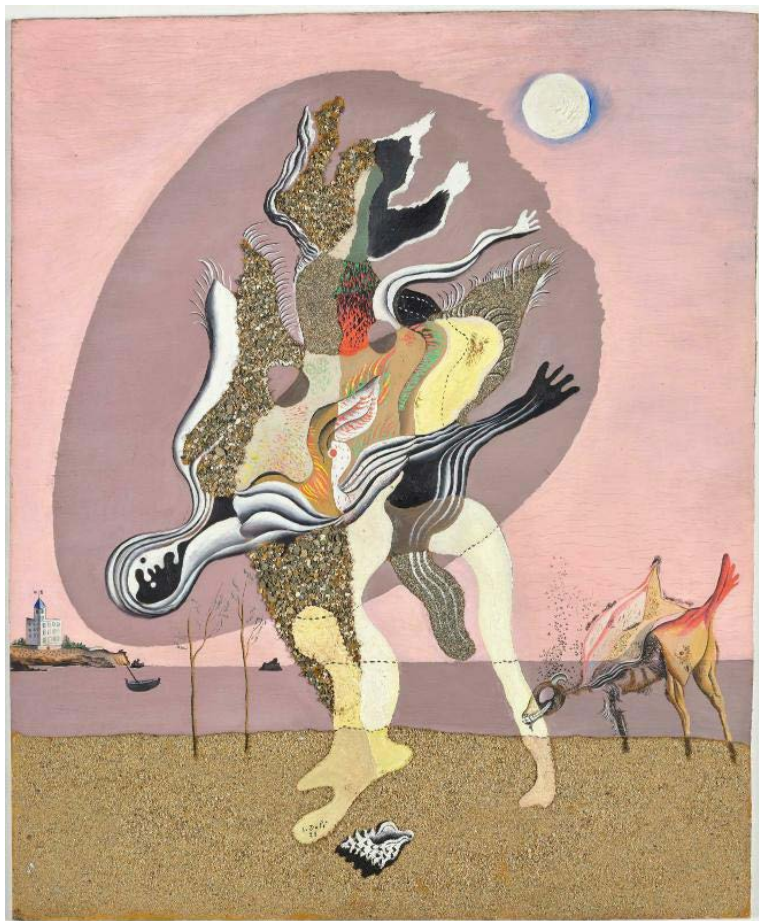


Fig 6. L'âne pourri, 1928

A year earlier, with his painting *Cenicitas*, Dali already offered in his practice a reference to decomposition, a theme which would become predominant for the surrealist artist.

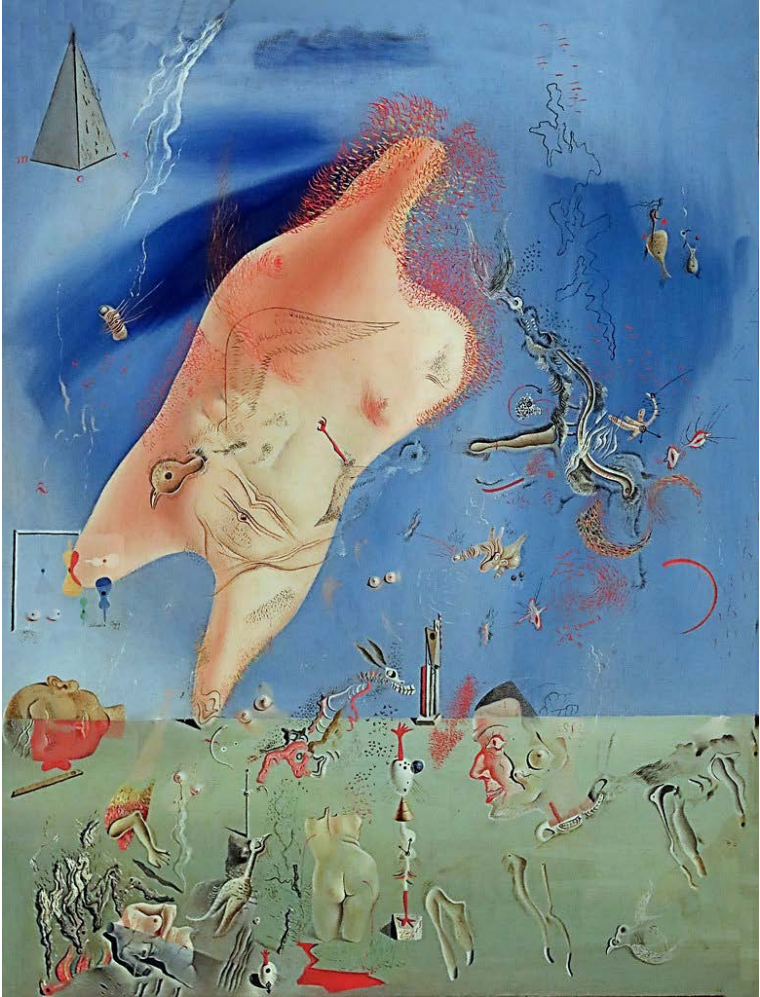


Fig 7. *Cenicitas*, 1927

While Baudelaire takes a poetic and symbolic approach to the rot that he aestheticizes, Dali, on the contrary, uses it as a means of political denunciation. Indeed, rot can have very important political and ecological significance. This is what the artist Klaus Pichler tries to represent through his contemporary still life photographs. The title of his series One third refers to the study made by the United Nations which shows that a third of the entire food production on Earth is wasted. These rotten food compositions are a reminder that 925 million people around the world are facing famine.

With these luxurious portraits, Pichler wants us to reflect on our own consumer behavior and seeks to redefine the value that we give to food, while entire populations are threatened by starvation. It is too true that we throw away food that is still edible. Expiry dates also contribute to this massive waste and overconsumption.

«If you go through the whole series, I think you'll see more than one picture that you've experienced in your home».

Klaus Pichler



Fig 8. Lemons : Place of production: Limassol, Cyprus
Transporting distance: 2.050 km Carbon footprint (total) per kg: 0,72 kg
Water requirement (total) per kg: 448 l



Fig 9. Fruit Cake : Place of production: Osnabrück, Germany
Transporting distance: 1.003 km Carbon footprint (transport)
per kg: 1,09 kg Water requirement (total) per kg: unknown











































Personal collection of fruits and a fish in decomposition



Walking in my garden, my feet try to avoid those fallen corpses but my eyes, them, are attracted by them. My gaze is absorbed and I cannot turn away from these strange colors. My ears are invaded by the glorious song of the flies which accumulate on these new prey. Juicy and dripping, I don't dare take them in my hands and yet all this decomposition captivates me. I ended up picking them up, collecting them and photographing them like precious relics. They were everywhere on the floor and soon more would fall from the trees. I found them beautiful and full of life.

On a human scale, Kathleen Ryan also offers us enormous still lifes, shiny and lying on the ground. With these gigantic rotten fruits, Ryan marks the tension between the beautiful and the grotesque and between the repulsion and attraction for this rottenness made of semi-precious stones. By confronting us with this human scale rot, Ryan also questions our excessive consumerism. The choice of these luxurious and very resistant materials which are amethyst, quartz, amazonite, marble and hard and durable gemstones, contrast with the decay represented by the bunch of grapes, cherries covered with mold or even skewered fruits. "Though the mold is the decay," she says, "it's the most alive part."



Fig 10. Bad Lime (Dark Star), 2021

It is true that beyond our perception of rot, whether we see it as dirt or as a wonder of nature, we are confronted with it in our daily lives. After having first demonstrated a negative apprehension towards rot and then offered another more nuanced vision through biology and arts, I will now talk about the triviality of rot. It is everywhere around us and we constantly manage to eradicate it or at least delay it. But it is more present than we think and we even sometimes appreciate it without necessarily knowing it.

We recognize the fruits that Klaus Pichler or Kathleen Ryan represent, we know them by heart, they are the same at our homes. When dark shades start to spread on the fruit, it's straight to the trash. And yet, we eat foods every day whose taste is largely acquired by rotting. We are talking about controlled rot here. The bread, meat, cheeses, wine, that we adore, are examples of this rottenness that we enjoy. Throughout the ages, man has learned to control the growth of bacteria and yeast in rotting food. The fermentation of bread, for example, was discovered during the time of the Egyptians. This ancestral technique has been perfected by bakers who leave the bread mixture to rot for several days to obtain the baker's yeast that makes us love bread so much. As for wine, we are talking about so-called noble rot. The very particular taste of the wine does not depend only on the grape or its year of harvest, nor on the barrels in which it is stored, but rather on the yeasts. The art of the winemaker consists of controlling the reproduction of yeast throughout fermentation. The grapes are covered in surrounding yeasts which then give the wine their aromas. The winemaker is therefore familiar with microorganisms since he needs yeasts to give the taste he wants to his wine. Meat also needs to mature and rot in order to achieve its delicious taste. We prefer to call this controlled rotting of meat «staling», a process which begins directly after the death of the animal and during which bacteria located in the tissues eat the membranes, which tenderizes the meat.

During these maturation days, fungus can develop on the surface of the meat. Once the work of the bacteria and fungi is complete, the contaminated part is removed and recovered by beauty product manufacturers. Hard to believe but true. It is to this controlled rotting process that we owe the meat its exquisite taste. Cheese is also the subject of perfectly controlled regulation in which the intervention of bacteria is essential. All the micro-organisms coexist either on the surface in the rind or in the cheese paste. The most moldy cheeses are those called «blue». Some other cheeses are even populated with mites that live in the cheese and reproduce there. But of course cheese lovers don't think of that when faced with a beautiful cheese.

But taste is not the only sense to be simulated by rot. Our eyesight is also sensitive to the rot that is sometimes part of the decor that surrounds us. It is more common to be confronted with the sight of rot on fruits, vegetables and other foods, but rot sometimes nestles on our walls, on our ceilings creating disturbing but fascinating yellowish, orangish or brownish stains. These stains are generally a bad sign indicating poor building conditions but they provide a magnificent pattern to the view. Combined with humidity, these stains involve all kinds of measures to eradicate.

I therefore agree with Lizan Freijisen's⁵ fascination with these unwanted mold stains. Unlike the other artists presented who work directly with rot, the Dutch artist only draws inspiration from it and then creates large carpets, wall hangers or blankets with patterns similar to those of water leaks and tracks of mold that have fascinated her since her childhood. They are like natural paintings.

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5 Based in Rotterdam, Lizan Freijisen is a dutch artist and designer whose practice evolved from painting, mixed media and public space, to photographic research and her famous hand tufting carpets that are now internationally exhibited. Her works talk about transformation and time.

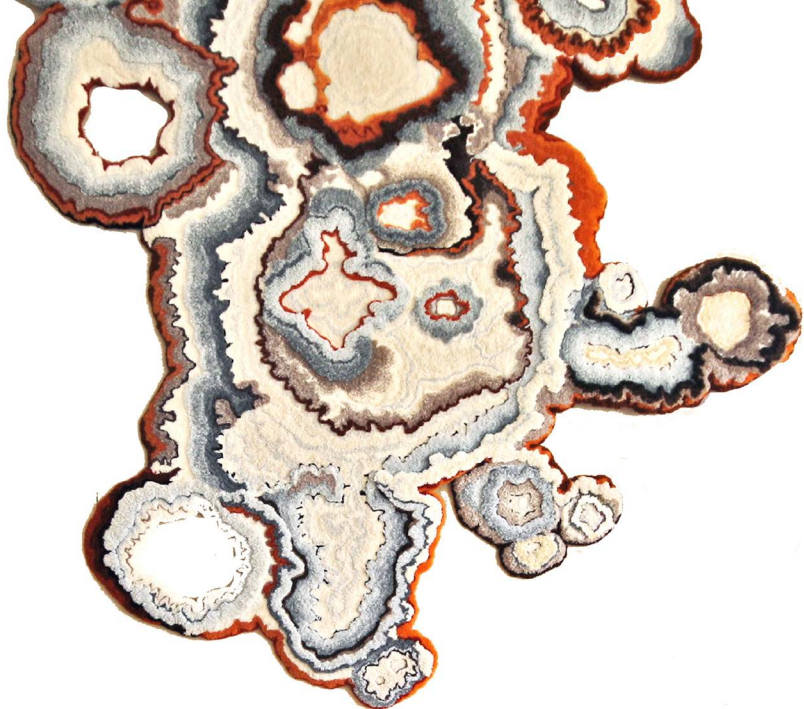


Fig 11. Kings rug in blue, 2012-2017

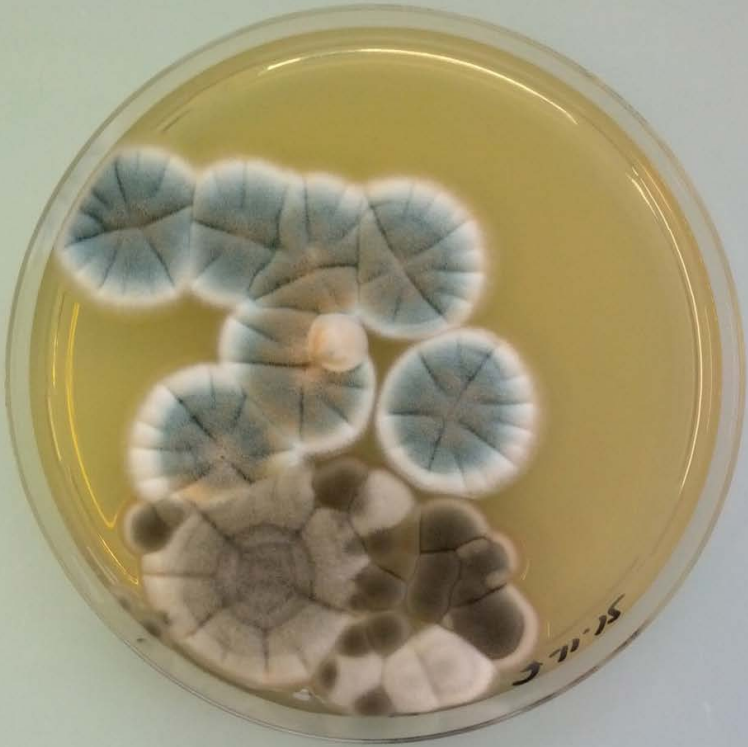


Fig 12. Pink fungi carpet, 2020-2021

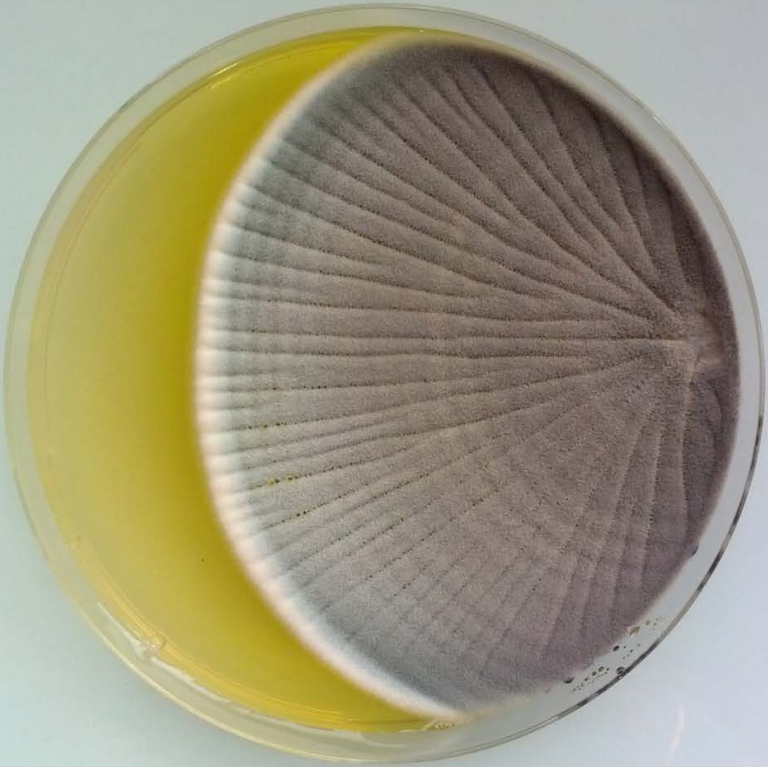
The wool that Lizan Freijisen uses to recreate these large spots makes it a comfortable, attractive surface. Unlike in real life, it is a surface in which you want to be surrounded. Lizan Freijisen offers a very positive image of mushrooms. “Embracing imperfection is in fact a response to the overcontrolled society in which we live”, she explains.

With a different approach from the one of Lisan Freijesen, the artist Antoine Bridier Nahmias⁶ offers us another vision and appropriation of the random patterns of mold. Thanks to its Magical contamination collection, Nahmias combines science and art and offers us a panel of the impressive diversity of mold in terms of its appearance and texture. With his collection, he shows us all the colors, shapes and patterns that bacteria can create and their limitless characteristics. His petri dishes contain within them a whole world of creation.

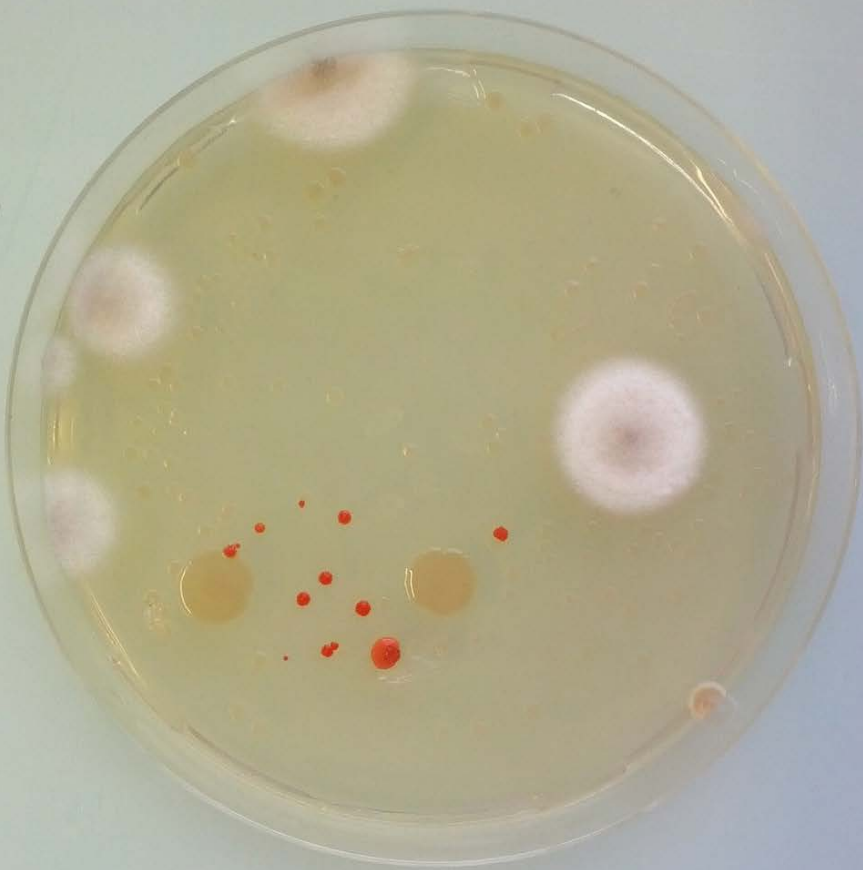
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6 Antoine Bridier Nahmias is a teacher at University Paris Diderot. He got a degree in Molecular and Cellular Biology. His research generally focuses on the evolution of microorganisms. He photographically documents his research on his tumblr page that offers us his collection "magical contamination".



















But beyond its pattern, its colors, its smell, its appearance and its scale, rot is above all synonymous with a new process which brings hope. Again with an ecological approach and in opposition to the apocalyptic vision of Daniele del Nero, Johanna Martensson⁷ speaks of regeneration, thanks to rot, on a planetary scale with her photography series Decor. Her models made from bread tell us about the decomposition of buildings and cities but this time to imagine a renewal after the destruction. The artist suggests imagining this destruction not as an end but only as a future ground for the forces of nature. Abandoned by humans, cities and buildings would quickly become colonized with mold and fall into decay; and years later would become forests and

⁷ Johanna Martensson is an artist working with scenography for theaters, dance, photography and film. She studied Design for Performance at Central St Martins College of Art and Design in London. She works in collaboration with a wide range of theaters and also pursues her own projects.

places for animals and plants to prosper. These six photographs are therefore not a projection of the catastrophic result of our time on Earth but a promise of renewal.













To conclude,

is it really possible to establish a single perception of rot in our society? I do not think so. For the simple reason that rot is not a new process that we are facing, but a state that preceded us and which persists over time, resisting everything. Also because we all have a different perception towards rot. For some it is awful, a threat to hygiene and health. And for others, rot is magnificent and has magical virtues. When I first started being interested in the rotten fruits of my garden, I didn't dare take them in my hands. Their textures and colors worried me and at the same time were the reason for my interest in these processed fruits. But beyond my disgust, a fascination with this controversial aesthetic awoke in me. Then all my research only fueled this new and strange interest growing inside me about rot. In my research I faced not just one perception but many; and encountered various distinct areas dealing with rot. The historical perception first brought me back to a more morbid vision of rot. Until the 19th century, rot was associated with religious and moral problems since it was challenging the transcendence of Man. Then biology and medicine took rot away from the religious framework, and offered us another vision of rot explaining all the fundamental and vital consequences of microorganisms. This more scientific research opened my eyes to the benefits of these much-hated little beings. Then from the 19th century, artists restored rot and putrefaction to its lost transcendence by giving it a new aesthetic and symbolic status. A general fascination took place and anchored the rot in artistic practices even today.

Some artists have even given rot a political aim by giving it an ecological impact. I discovered many artists whose works using rot fascinated me both by the representation of it and by the message that their works transmit. But in the end, whatever the field dealing with rot, it is a phenomenon that escapes us. As for what it says about us and our condition as mortals, I think it

is impossible to contradict the fact that it sends us back to our own decomposition and decay; and for the optimists, also to a certain natural regeneration.

This publication brought me new knowledge about a phenomenon that occupies our space, both interior and exterior. I am happy to have learned so much about these beings with whom we live every day and to whom we owe the constant renewal of life. I learned that we should not reduce them to simple destroyers of our food, buildings, materials, objects, but instead see them as tiny agents, sources of life, which in a sense is reassuring.

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