



The Art of Cooking

Martha Rosler

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In the early 1970s, in the midst of a body of work linking cuisine, cooking, women, labor, imperialism, and even photography, Martha Rosler wrote *The Art of Cooking*, a mock dialogue between Julia Child, the pioneer television chef schooling Americans in how to produce haute cuisine at home, and then New York Times restaurant critic Craig Claiborne. Here published in full for the first time, *The Art of Cooking* consists in large part of quotations from books on cuisine and cooking from various eras redirected toward a discussion of the role of taste in art.

In its focus on the figure of the housewifely woman cooking for TV, *The Art of Cooking* brings to mind Rosler's celebrated video *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975). But like her 1977 video *Losing: A Conversation with the Parents*, this conversation is an absurdist reimagining of the confrontation between male and female discursive strategies and subject positions, centering on and departing from cultural uses of food. It is also a further chapter in her challenge to (Kantian-derived) Modernist notions of separation and her interrogation of hierarchies of taste and value, especially in relation to art—a sequence that included *Monumental Garage Sale* of 1973. In each case, feminism and performance are fused with conceptual art strategies and neo-avantgardist aims of bridging the boundaries between art and everyday life.

Written when cooking and cuisine were first being marketed as a social good and a cultural necessity to educated housewives and well-heeled diners alike, *The Art of Cooking* reflects the rapid rise in sales of cookbooks lavishly illustrated with newly perfected color printing. These blockbusters touted regional and national cuisines to provide a freshly affluent middle class with an aspirational cosmopolitanism often expressed only as a kind of armchair tourism. In the current moment of renewed food fixations and fetishisms, and the widening cult of celebrity chefs, while culinary selections are threatening to displace most other aesthetic choices, *The Art of Cooking* provides a sideways glance at the rhetorics brought to bear on these adventures in production, consumption, and daily life.

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