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Communication

A Peek into the Foreign Restaurants at the Shanghai World Expo, 2010

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The Shanghai World Expo of 2010 was arguably the most important universal exhibition in history. It attracted more than 73 million of visitors from May to September 2010 and featured exhibitions from over 250 countries and international organizations. This paper draws on a three month fieldwork at the Shanghai World Expo. It addresses the link between the widespread use of visual mediations in the marketing, organization and presentation of foreign national restaurants on the Expo site and the bodily experience of both cooks and customers. In other words, it will examine how the preparation and consumption of food in the spectacular, globalized and transnational context of the World Expo can be treated as performance framed in various regimes of visibility, which translated the showcasing of carnal experiences and the body techniques into sources of cultural and economic value.

This paper will be divided into three parts. In the first part, I will examine the different logics behind the public exhibition of kitchens in many foreign restaurants of the world Expo. It appears that in some cases (such as the 6SENS restaurant of the French pavilion, the Bocuse restaurant at the Rhône-Alpes Pavilion and the Belgian restaurant), the visual live presentation of the restaurant kitchens was integrated into the exhibitionary complex of the pavilion in order to promote the singularity of a national craft and the specific value of an embodied cultural heritage. However, in the case of many other foreign restaurants, two other exhibitionary logics were observed. One was the construction of a spectacular performance, more in line with the festive, spectacular and touristic dimension of the world expo and less connected to the promotion of gastronomic singularity. The other logic behind the public exhibition of kitchens, while not necessarily disconnected from the two above, was related to the disciplinary dimension of the world expo as a site of globalization in practice and addressed the issues consumer trust, hygiene and work discipline by making food preparation visible and transparent.

In the second I will tackle the issue of mediation between foreign restaurant managers and cooks and the Chinese employees hired for the world expo, in order to show the negotiations in the transmission of culinary know-how. In the second part, I will deal with the issue of intercultural mediation between foreign cooks and restaurant managers and the Chinese staff employed for the World Expo. I will pay a special attention to the Bocuse restaurant in the Rhône-Alpes pavilion which established a partnership between the Bocuse culinary school in Lyon and the Shanghai Institute of Tourism which aimed at the development of an intercultural management know-how and the transmission of French culinary techniques in China, with a particular focus on the importance of culinary gestures.

The third part will focus on the consumer experience of the Chinese public at the foreign restaurants, and the visual *mise-en-scène* of their sensual contact with food and drink, as well as the general atmosphere of the restaurants. It will thus highlight how the representational touristic practices are entangled in a wider carnal dimension, or an emerging habitus in contemporary urban China.