

Ambiguous Implements is the result of an enquiry that investigates the extent to which ambiguous eating implements, when used to consume food, have the potential to create new forms of experience. The outcomes of this research are a collection of artefacts used for eating which form this multi-component output. The initial tests and investigations led to the development of a series of double-lobed copper spoons, which curator Laura Mansfield selected to be published in FEAST Journal's online Cutlery edition in 2016. In collaboration with Mansfield and cross-disciplinary artist Nuala Clooney, Colley was awarded Arts Council England funding to support the further research and development of her Ambiguous Implements collection and to undertake a national group touring exhibition of the same name (Sheffield, Birmingham, Folkestone and Rochdale), alongside a series of four concurrent public events including family workshops, symposiums and a tasting session. The group exhibition was featured in the Crafts Council's publication CRAFTS and Corridor8, the online contemporary arts and writing journal.

Participants responding to works from Colley's Ambiguous Implements collection, using them to consume their lunch, commented: that they "felt challenged, but in a good way", reflecting that "it

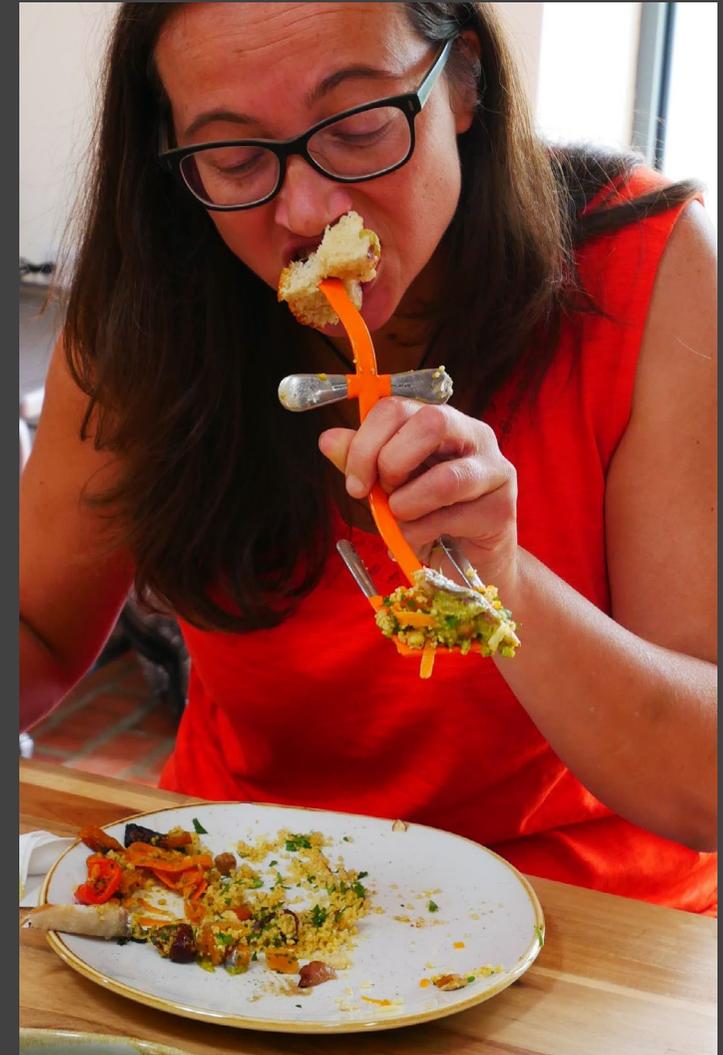
slowed down my process". Another participant stated that "using an implement of choice made eating a very individual experience, unlike the uniform experience of eating that uniform utensils inspire. (The) social aspect and the conversation created by the utensils made the experience extra enjoyable". The dissemination of the above instigated Steinbeisser to commission 60+ Cutlery Comb and For-K-andle pieces to be used in their internationally renowned Experimental Gastronomy events during June 2019. These commissioned works featured in design publications across the Middle East, Canada, South Korea, France, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Italy and the UK.



Above: Cutlery Comb used during Raw\*\* Steinbeisser's Experimental Gastronomy events, 14-16 June 2019. Photography: Kathrin Koschitski

- **Ambiguous Implements** is a collection of artefacts that Colley began developing in 2015 at Nottingham Trent University's *Summer Lodge* residency. The collection developed over a number of years and created a variety of artefact outputs which are diverse in their use of materials, techniques and processes. In many cases the artefacts are created quickly and could be considered as 3D models and test pieces, as opposed to highly refined and technically accomplished outputs. They might be better described as a range of 3D sketches that have been created to freely test-out her ideas.

Colley is inspired by her body and aims to analyse the functioning of her internal organs through interoceptive sensing. The artefacts are designed to communicate aspects of her experience to others through their use as challenging eating tools. Her observation of these interactions serve to enhance her own physical awareness especially by focussing on processes surrounding food and eating. Colley suffers from the autoimmune disease systemic sclerosis, which causes her to have poor oesophageal function and places various limitations on her lifestyle.



[View PDF of Ambiguous Implements outputs](#)

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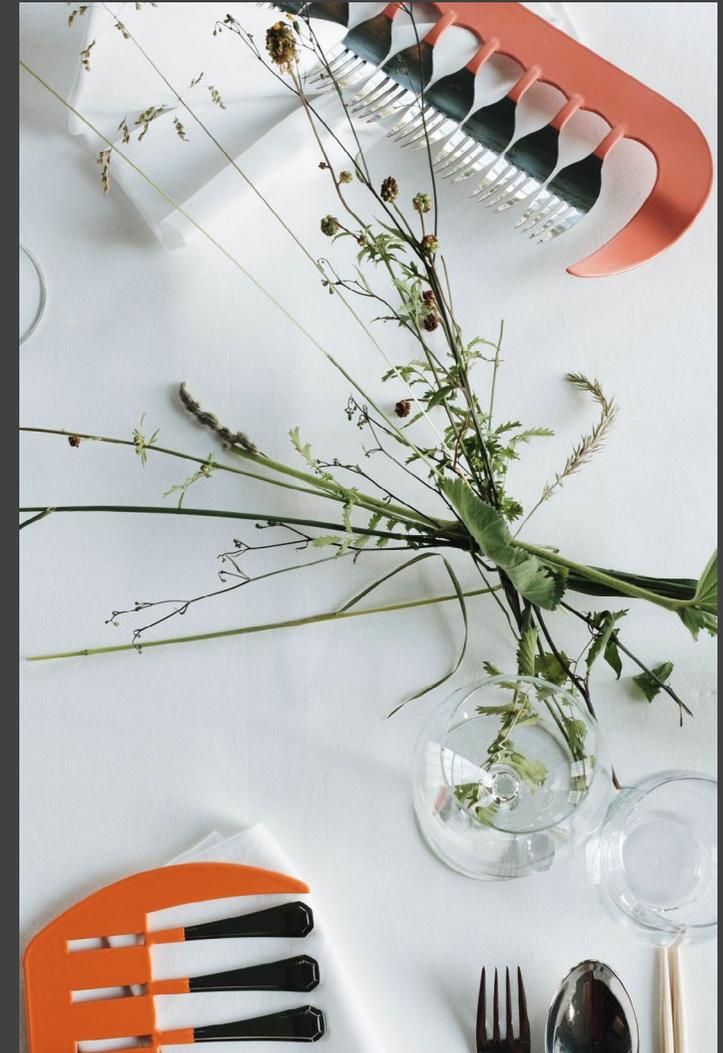
○ Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1999) poses the question “How does food perform to the sensory modalities unique to it?”, stating that “A key to this question is in a series of dissociations.”  
● **Ambiguous Implements** is a collection of artefacts that form those dissociations by referencing, juxtaposing or combining aspects of recognised household objects. Series within the collection, such as the *Cutlery Combs and For-K-andles*, are challenging because they play with imagined sensory perceptions, abject associations (Kristeva, 1984) and disgust (Rozin et al, 1995) by implying possible dual functions that are at odds, for example eating with a hair-filled comb.

KIRSCHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, B. 1999 ‘Playing to the Senses: Food as a Performance Medium’ in Richard Gough, *Performance Research: On Cooking*. 1-30, London: Routledge  
ISBN: 978-0-415-19802  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.1999.10871639>

KRISTEVA, J. 1984. *The Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. New York: Columbia University Press  
ISBN 0-231-05346-0  
[View PDF online](#)

ROZIN, P., NEMEROFF, C., HOROWITZ, M., GORDON, B. & VOET, W. 1995. The Borders of the Self: Contamination sensitivity

and potency of the mouth, other apertures and body parts. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 29, p.318-340.  
<https://doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1995.1019>



[View PDF of Cutlery Combs and For-K-andles](#)



This research occurred through practical making and the exploration of a range of materials and processes which result in the creation of artefacts. Concepts and inspiration derive from Colley's experience of living in and with her body, documenting her experiences and sensations through photography, drawing, collage and a range of 3D making processes, including CAD.



Documenting the mouth through photography.



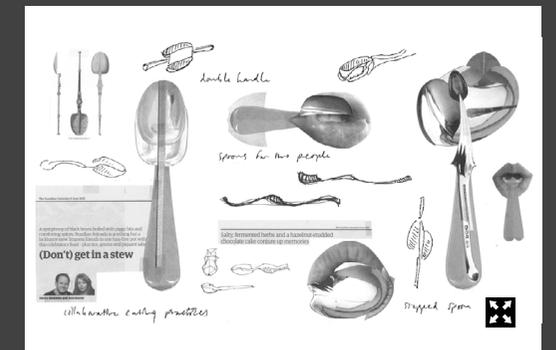
Laser-welded connections shown in detail. 3D development in CAD (Rhino), test pieces exploring handle designs and use in context.



Communicating eating sensation through collage.



Documenting eating sensations through drawing and making 3D paper models.



Drawing, collage and secondary research sources combined to support design development.



Beginning the making process during the 2015 Summer Lodge residency at Nottingham Trent University. Press-formed copper components - testing compositions and soldering in the workshop.



2017 developing tooling to fit into a vice in order to create bends in the cutlery comb frames.

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The artefacts were used by participants during a series of interactive meal events to elicit information and support the collection's further development.

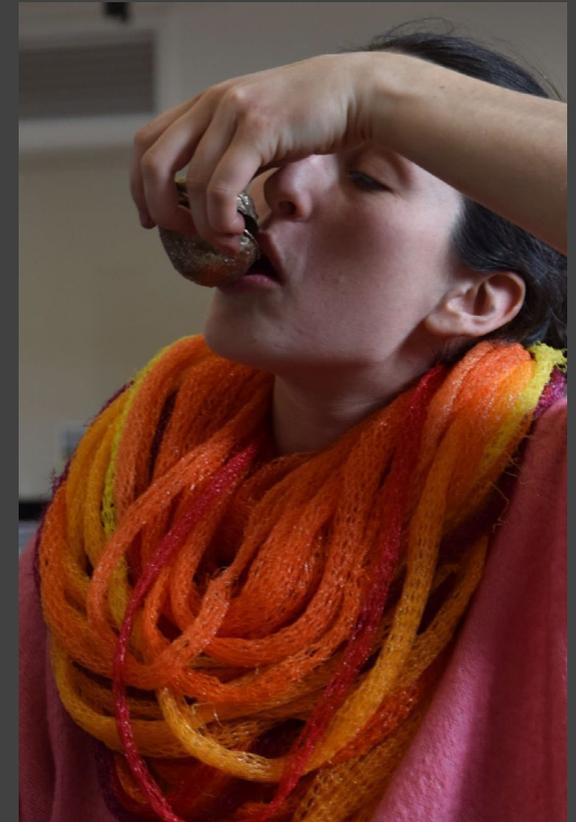
- From February - March 2019 Colley held her first solo show *Re:mains* at the *Sheffield Institute of Arts Gallery*, Sheffield Hallam University. During the exhibition's run she held a series of interactive lunchtime events that were open to the public where participants could come and eat their lunch whilst wearing and using the exhibited collections of jewellery and ambiguous eating implements.

Qualitative research in the form of photography and questionnaires were gathered from 32 participants during the eight interactive events staged throughout the exhibition's four-week display period. Colley's visual record of the participants' physical interactions evidences the awkwardness of the artefact's use. Reflective responses were gathered after participants had finished eating - one stated that they "*felt challenged, but in a good way*", reflecting that "*it slowed down my process*". Another participant commented, "*Eating is such a regular event, I've never begun to contemplate anything about it.*" They stated that the artefact "*was familiar yet different*" and wondered whether it had "*lost its functionality completely or not?*"

In August 2019 Colley undertook a residency at Clayhill Arts which culminated in an artist talk and interactive meal event on the 8th of that month, which was free to attend and open to the public. Participants (approx. 10-12) were invited to interact with the work and use the ambiguous eating implements to consume their lunch. As before, interactions were documented through photography and the completion of a written questionnaire in order to gather qualitative data, which was used to inform the further development of the collection.



[View PDF Clayhill Arts Ambiguous Implements interactive event](#)



[View PDF of Re:mains exhibition - interactive events](#)



The earliest pieces developed as part of the **Ambiguous Implements** collection were a series of copper *Double-lobed Spoons*, one of which, titled *Two-Fingered Salute*, was submitted to and published in the 2016 online [Cutlery edition](#) of [FEAST Journal](#), edited by curator Laura Mansfield.

In that same year Colley submitted 3 series from the **Ambiguous Implements** collection - *Double-lobed Spoons*, *Spat-spoon* and *Taking Stock* - to the [Cutlery Design Challenge](#). *Double-lobed Spoons* and *Taking Stock* were selected to be included in their exhibition of contemporary cutlery and flatware at Cutler's Hall, London.

One of the judges on the *Cutlery Design Challenge* panel was Zoe Laughlin from UCL's *Institute of Making*. As a result, Colley was invited to take part in the *Institute of Making's* annual [Festival of Stuff](#) event in July 2016, where the institute opens to the public and welcomes thousands of visitors each year to explore materials and to enjoy making. For the event Colley developed a brush-making workshop, as she'd started to design and create a range of brush-like

tools for eating and playing with your food . The creative brush making workshop was very well received by the public, as it was accessible to all ages and abilities.



Cutlery Design Challenge exhibition, 2016, Cutler's Hall, London



Brush making workshop, Festival of Stuff 2016, Institute of Making, UCL, London

○ Since 2015 Colley had been developing BYIWITHIBY, a performative collaboration with cross-disciplinary artist Nuala Clooney. Each artist designed and created work separately, coming together to present their artefacts to the public and inviting them to interact through the consumption of food and drink.

The collaborative presentation of separately designed and created works culminated in the curation of the first of the **Ambiguous Implements** exhibitions at Roco Cooperative's Bl\_nk Space Gallery in Sheffield (7th - 26th July 2017).



BY|WITH|BY interactive event, In Dialogue symposium 2016, Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham



BY|WITH|BY collaborative presentation and interactive event, ACJ 20:20 Visions conference, Sheffield Hallam University,

The first BYIWITHIBY collaboration was held in 2016 at the [In Dialogue symposium](#) at Nottingham Contemporary. The second presentation and interactive event coincided with the launch of the **Ambiguous Implements** national touring exhibition in Sheffield and was delivered at the [Association for Contemporary Jewellery's 20:20 Visions conference at Sheffield Hallam University](#) in June 2017.

- In collaboration with curator Laura Mansfield and cross-disciplinary artist Nuala Clooney, Colley gained Arts Council England funding (GFTA-00030323) to support the further development of her **Ambiguous Implements**
- collection and to undertake a
- national group touring exhibition (Sheffield, Folkestone, Birmingham and Rochdale) of the same name, featuring the work of 18 artists.
- Alongside the exhibition were a series of supporting public events, such as family workshops, symposiums and a tasting session, which took place throughout 2017-18.

Following the exhibition's launch on 7 July 2017 at Roco Cooperative's Bl\_nk Space Gallery in Sheffield, the exhibition continued its tour at [B&B Project Space](#) in Folkestone from 28th October - 19th November 2017, launching with the first of two symposia *Crafting the Contemporary* on Saturday 28th October at Folkestone Museum, High Street, Folkestone. The exhibition travelled to the School of Jewellery's [Vittoria Street Gallery](#) in Birmingham's historic Jewellery Quarter (29th November - 15th December 2017) and it's final touring venue was *Contemporary Forward* at [Touchstones Rochdale](#) (21 April to 30 June 2018).

*The Ambiguous Implements* exhibition was featured in the Crafts Council's publication CRAFTS

and reviewed at its final venue *Contemporary Forward* Touchstones Rochdale by [Corridor8](#).

# Ambiguous Implements

<https://ambiguous-show.tumblr.com/>



[View PDF of Ambiguous Implements national touring group exhibition](#)



In 2017-18 Colley led creative brush making workshops as part of the **Ambiguous Implements** national group touring exhibition's public engagement. One was held at Birmingham City University's School of Jewellery and another during [Touchstone Rochdale's Wakes Day celebration event](#) on Saturday 26th May 2018. As well as creating brush designs, these workshops also developed to explore drawing and painting with pigments and paints derived from food waste.



Bamboo brushes, 2018, bamboo and grass (garden waste)



Creative brush making workshop, Wakes Day celebration event, Touchstone Rochdale, Rochdale



Creative brush making workshop, School of Jewellery, Birmingham City University, Birmingham

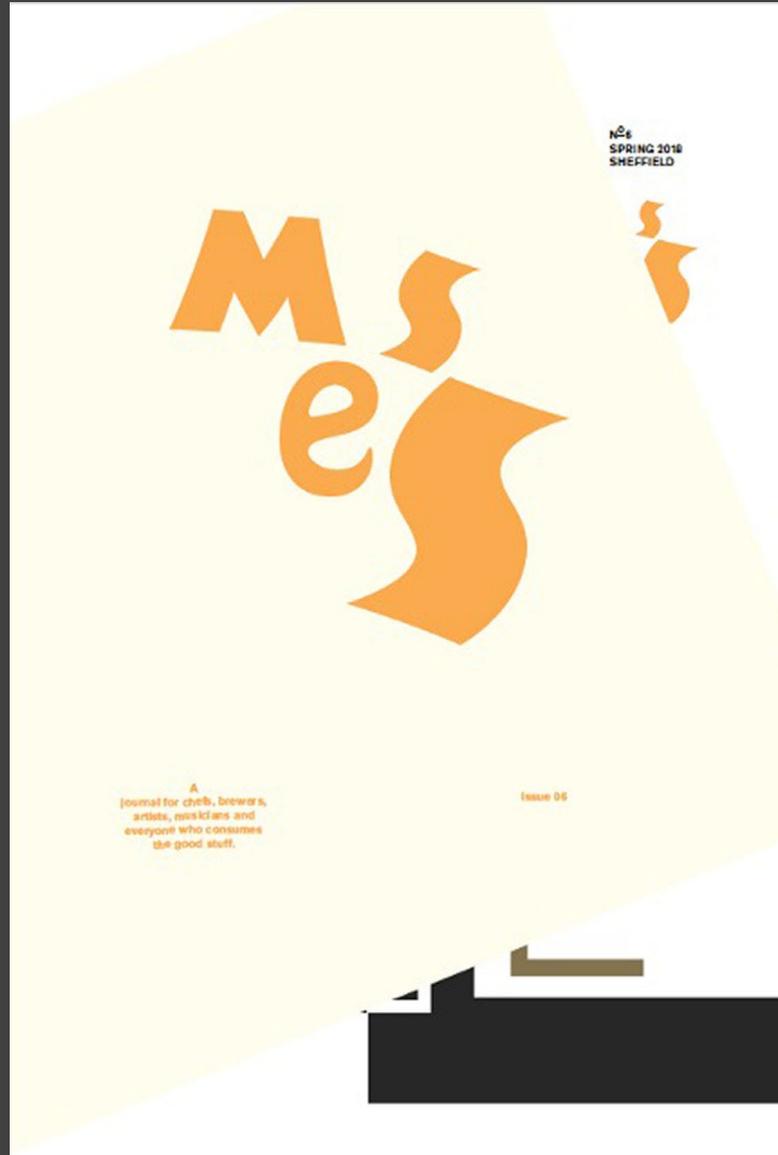


Creative brush making workshop, Wakes Day celebration event, Touchstone Rochdale, Rochdale



Colley developed her *Double-lobed Spoon* series further through the article *Food-Metal Alchemy* which was published in [No.6 the Spring, 2018 edition](#) of Sheffield's [How Fine a Mess](#) Journal.

Food stuffs, particularly acidic and fermented fruits, have been used historically to clean, patinate and in some cases etch the surfaces of metals. Colley carried out a series of tests on copper, which included the use of red wine, banana peel, tomatoes, raspberries, lemon juice, orange juice, beetroot peel and foraged blackberries. The resulting surface reactions were of interest to Colley in communicating a sense of the damage which could be caused to the body during prolonged and repeated bouts of chronic acid reflux, which she experiences regularly.



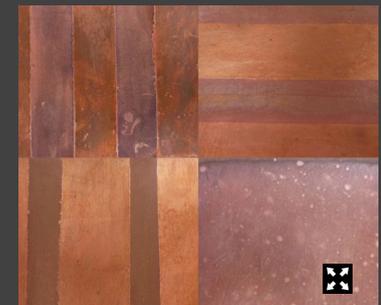
[View PDF of How Fine A Mess journal No.6](#)



*Double-lobed spoon series (wearable version), 2018, banana peel patinated press-formed copper*



*Patinated copper surface tests*



*Patinated copper surface tests*

○ In 2018 Colley was commissioned by [Steinbeisser](#) to create 60-70 *Cutlery Combs* for their internationally renowned *Experimental Gastronomy*. From 14-16th June 2019 [Steinbeisser](#) prominently presented the artefacts in *RAW\*\* with Andre Chiang* at Vereniging Hendrick de Keyser in Amsterdam. Colley created 61 *Cutlery Comb* and *For-K-andle* pieces in total, which were made available to diners throughout each event, to be used whenever and however they wished to. There were approximately 60 diners each evening, totalling 180 participants across the weekend's three events.

ADRC provided funding to support Colley to create the artefacts and to attend the events in order to observe the diners interactions with her implements first-hand. It was notable that some participants were curious and experimental, using the ambiguous implements to consume some of the courses, where others didn't use them at all. At the end of the event one of Steinbeisser's two founding directors Martin Kullick spoke to diners about the importance of curiosity and of potential 'missed opportunities' presented to them throughout their dining experience. This was an interesting way to present and make use of the works, as the flatware and tableware supplied by *Steinbeisser* are usually selected by the chef in relation to a particular course that they have

designed specifically for the event. Colley was very encouraged and intrigued by how her work was used by participants and curated by *Steinbeisser* throughout each event.

The event was featured in design publications across the Middle East, Canada, South Korea, France, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Italy and the UK. Photography: Kathrin Koschitski.



[View PDF of Raw\\*\\* Steinbeisser's Experimental Gastronomy events, 14-16 June 2019. Photography: Kathrin Koschitski](#)

Steinbeisser's Raw\*\*event was featured in design publications across the Middle East, Canada, South Korea, France, Spain, Hungary, Croatia, Germany, Italy and the UK. Publications include: *The Experimental Eater*, Design Anthology UK, Issue 3, 2019; Architectural Digest Middle East December 2019 / January 2020; Steinbeisser's Artistic Utensils, NUVO Canada, January 2020 <https://nuvomagazine.com/magazine/winter-2019/steinbeissers-art-utensils-experimental-gastronomy>; *Gastronomia sperimentale: la nuova frontiera del design*, AD Design Italia <https://www.ad-italia.it/design/lifestyle/2019/11/06/gastronomia-sperimentale-la-nuova-frontiera-del-design/>; South Korean monthly Design Magazine, March 2020; MILK Magazine, France; *Art and Cuisine: The Steinbeisser initiative celebrates bizarre table culture*, AD Germany, September 2019 <https://www.ad-magazin.de/article/steinbeisser>; Sensa magazine, Hungary; Vecernij, Croatia; Saber y Sabor magazine, Spain.

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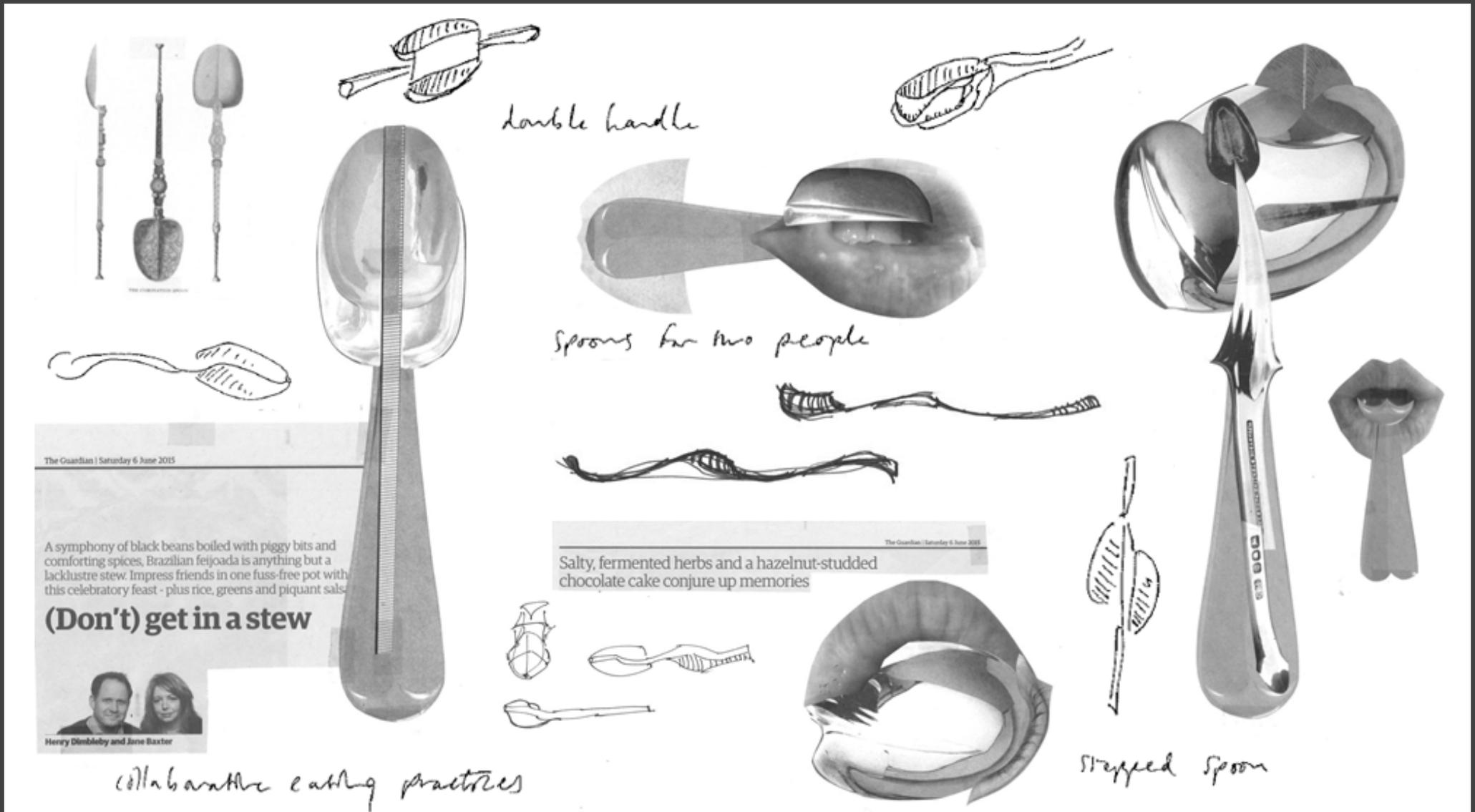


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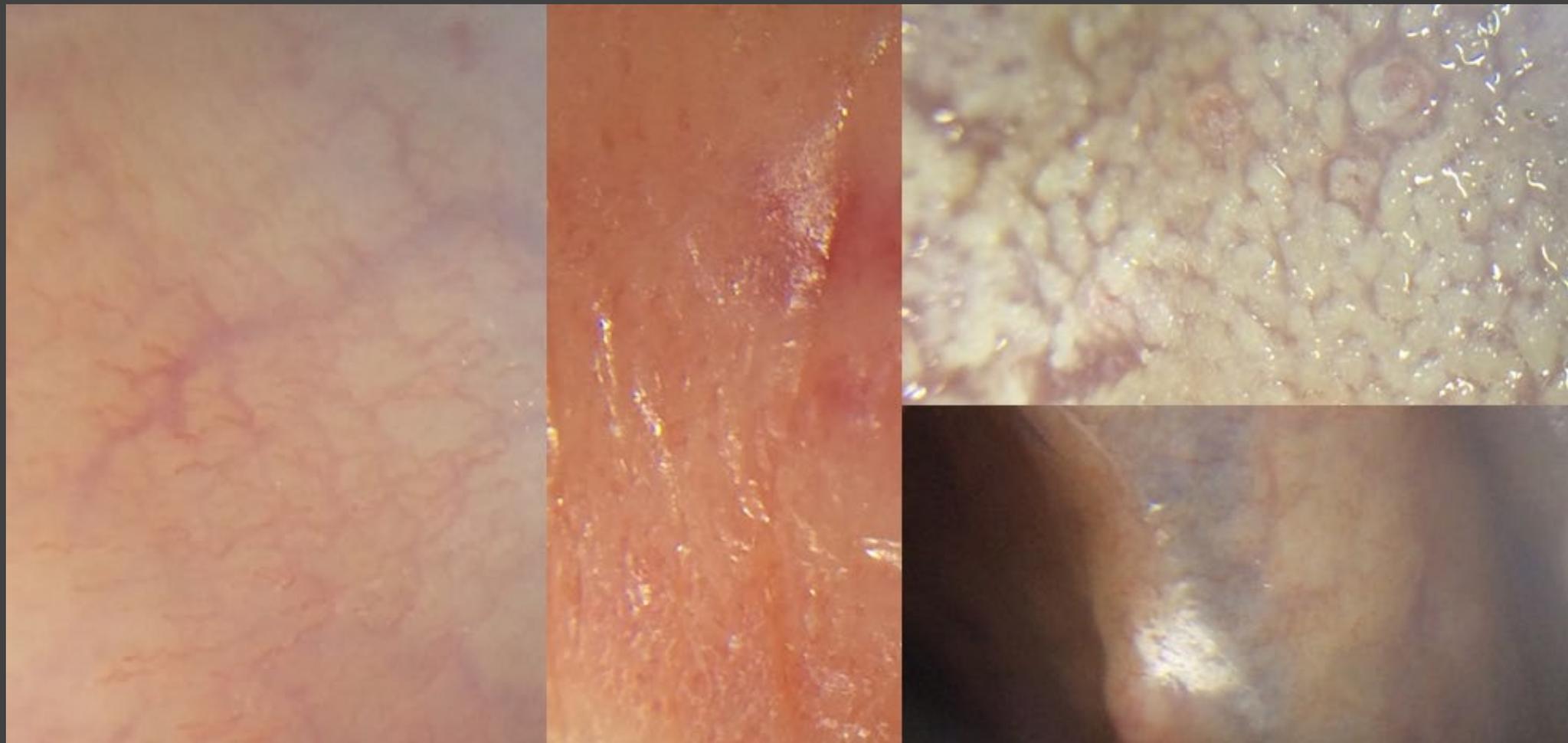


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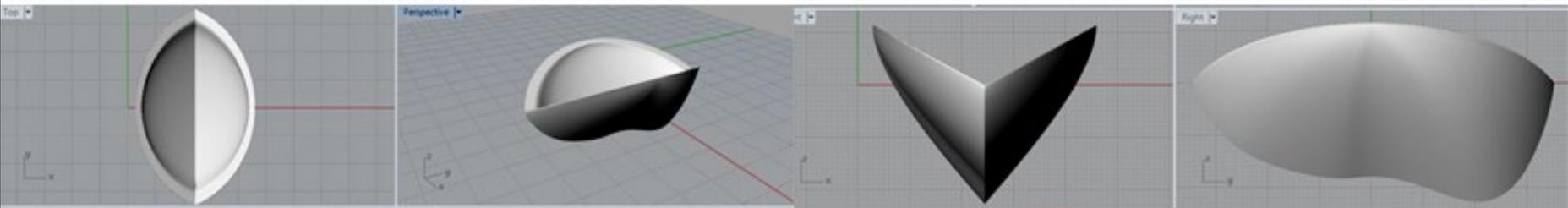
Above: PDFs of national and international press and design publications featuring Steinbeisser's Raw\*\*events in Amsterdam, June 2019



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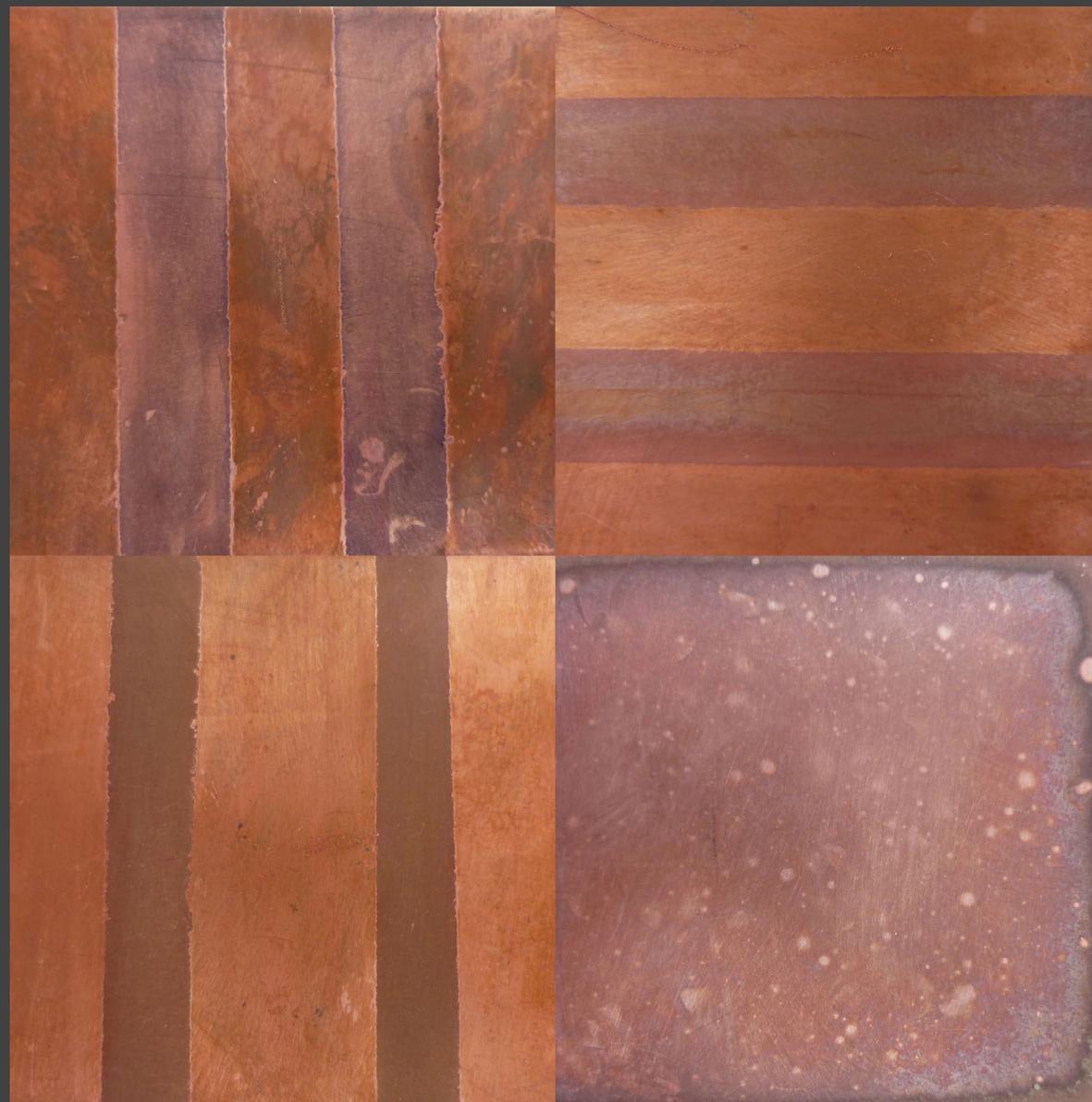
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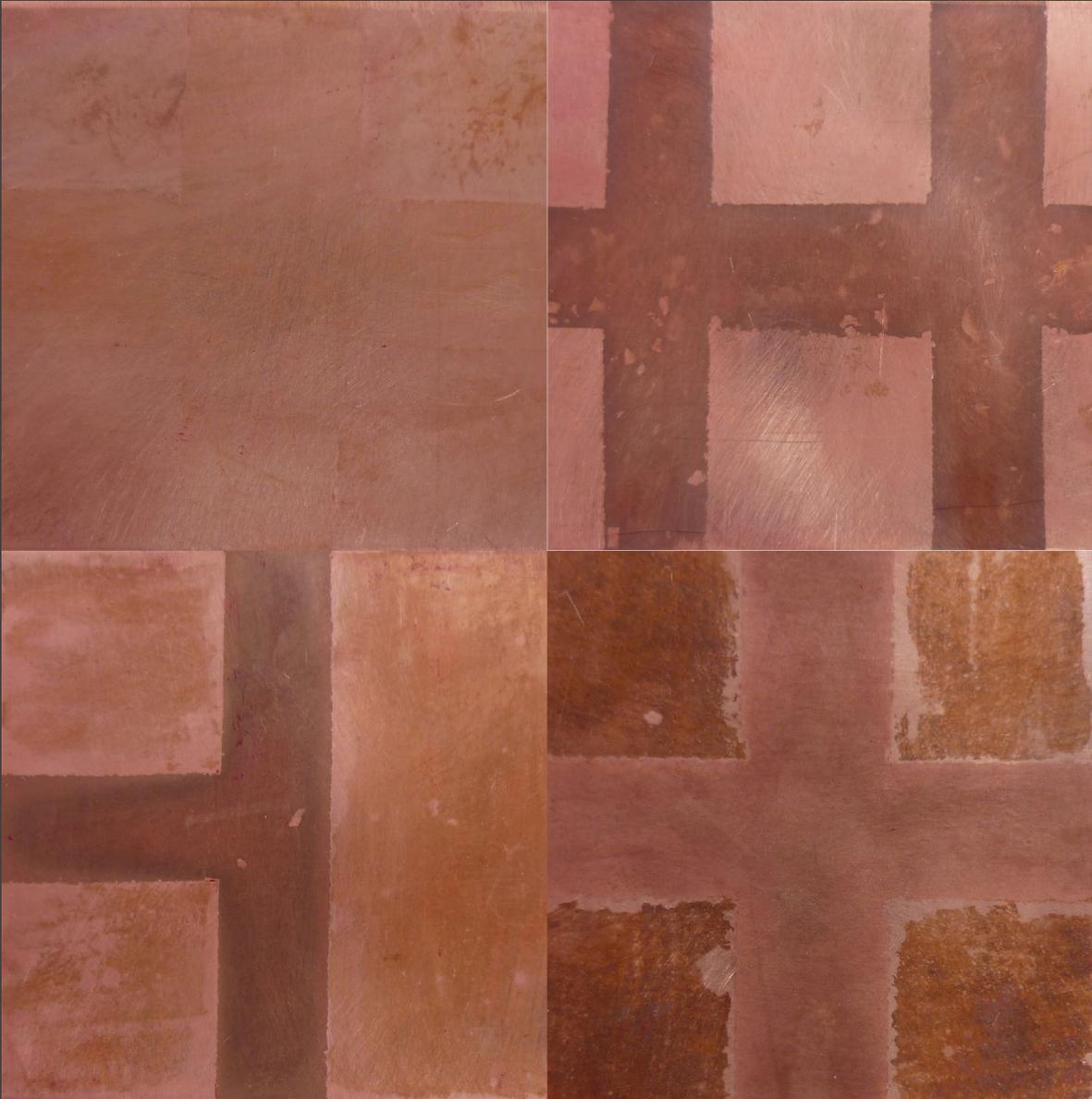
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