

A RECIPE FOR PRIVACY: ARTISTS' BOOKS AND THE ROLE OF CULINARY EXCHANGE IN *THE LEAKED RECIPES COOKBOOK*

TERESA WEINHOLTZ

Universidade Católica Portuguesa
ORCID ID 0009-0005-5099-2604
s-tweinholtz@ucp.pt

ABSTRACT:

Following their investigation into the Enron accounting scandal in 2001, the US government released over 500,000 of the company's emails to the public. In addition to insight into the professional and personal lives of former Enron employees, these leaked correspondences also include the occasional sharing of recipes. In her artist's book *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* (2022), artist and human rights researcher Demetria Glace collects over fifty recipes from the released Enron data as well as other publicly available, leaked email databases. Artists' books as a genre are often associated with politically motivated activity, with the book format acting as the medium for the dissemination of ideas (Burkhart 2007, 25; Drucker 2004, 287). Accordingly, I argue, *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* adopts the medium of the artist's cookbook to provide social commentary on the topics of privacy and gender through the lenses of food sociology (Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo 1996) and women's cookbook studies (Theophano 2016). In this paper, I examine the role of the compiled cookbook as both a unifying and humanising force in a context of corruption and loss of privacy, as well as an agent

of feminist critique in a world of gendered food culture. To achieve this, I analyse selected excerpts from *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* within the context of their respective recipe exchange, considering the genre of the artist's book as a vehicle for social commentary.

KEYWORDS: Food Culture; Artists' Books; Privacy; Gender; Feminism; Artivism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is financed by Portuguese national funds through FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, under the scope of grant 2024.01584.BD.

1. Introduction

News of the 2001 accounting scandal involving energy-trading company Enron, followed by its bankruptcy, prompted the release of a database containing email correspondence from the corporation's final years of operation. This database, which includes over 500,000 emails exchanged between 158 senior executives of the company (Lavigne and Brain 2016a), was officially made public in March 2003 by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the U.S. government agency responsible for the investigation, under the rationale of providing full transparency to the public.

In addition to the personal correspondence between former Enron employees, some of the emails made public by this leak featured the occasional sharing of recipes, which inspired artist Demetria Glace to create her work *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* (2022). While the majority of the fifty-two recipes featured in the cookbook originate from the Enron Corporation email database, Glace also includes recipes found among the correspondence from other major data leaks, namely the “millions of emails that have been hacked, leaked, breached” (Glace 2022, 11) from entities like HBGary Federal, Sony Pictures, and Stratfor, as well as from political figures such as Emmanuel Macron and Hillary Clinton's campaign manager John Podesta. Unlike a simple compilation of culinary instructions, this cookbook also contains the email conversations through which their recipes were leaked, providing unique insight into the personal lives of their writers.

Artists' books are often linked to promoting politically charged ideology (Drucker 2004, 2, 287), with book artists often considering books as “perfect vehicles to convey art that [is] mostly about ideas” (Burkhart 2007, 25). This manifests itself in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, I argue, through the sharing of private recipes as both a humanising force and a vehicle for social transformation in contemporary society. In this paper, I analyse selected excerpts and recipes from *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* in the context of their exchange, considering the conventions of the artist's book genre as a medium for advocating socio-cultural and political transformation. Specifically, I consider how the artist's book appropriates the cookbook structure to emphasise its message. To explore this, I first define the concept of the artist's book as an established art form, its relation to materiality, and the historical conventions that allow the artist's book to act “as an

agent for social change” (Drucker 2004, 287). Following this, I examine the cultural context of the creation of *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* and its relation to the political potential of the artist’s book genre. Finally, I discuss how Glace’s cookbook, as an artwork surrounding culinary exchange, relates its discourse on food culture with topics of privacy and corruption as well as gender and feminism through the lenses of food sociology (Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo 1996) and women’s cookbook studies (Theophano 2016). In this sense, I underline the potential role of culinary exchange in the form of the artist’s book, a genre “that overtly take issue with aspects of the world in need of change” (Burkhart 2007, 25), conveying how *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* can function as a form of activism.

2. Defining the artist’s book

The definition of the artist’s book is a frequently debated topic in the book arts (Schmitz-Emans 2019, 14; Drucker 2004, 2; Klima 1998, 21), with discourse generally agreeing that the genre cannot be narrowed down to a fixed set of characteristics. Established during the second half of the twentieth century, the artist’s book is fundamentally an independent work of art (Drucker 2004, 2) that is created specifically for the book format and can range anywhere from unique objects to mass-produced editions (Burkhart 2007, 25). The role of these works as a medium for socio-political and cultural commentary is still being discussed among academics (Drucker 2004, 287; Weinholtz 2025, 121). This is largely due to its historical association with socialist movements of the 1960s (Lyons 1987, 7) as the book format has historically allowed for broader dissemination of artworks outside traditional gallery systems (White 2012, 46; Klima 1998, 41). In this sense, the artist’s book can often be evocative of its historical roots as an artform that performs a politically motivated process.

Closely associated with the *avant-garde* movement (Drucker 2004, 45), the modern artist’s book can indeed be related to the idealised concept of the *democratic multiple*, i.e. a publication that is inexpensive to reproduce and widely distributed by artists who “were interested in getting art off the wall, out of the gallery, and into the hands of a wide, democratic, or populist audience” (White 2012, 46). This idea became particularly influential “in the post-1945 era of art and literary activity” (Drucker 2004, 69), as artists shifted from creating individual handcrafted works to producing larger, democratic editions. This shift allowed

artists to reach broader audiences while maintaining a conceptual connection to the final product their work (White 2012, 46). However, while the idea of the democratic multiple became an essential part of the dissemination of the artist's book in the latter half of the twentieth century, it cannot be used "as a delimiting criterion for determining what is and is not an artist's book" (Drucker 2004, 72). As such, while the concept of democratic multiple remained historically linked to the dissemination of political ideas, the contemporary artist's book ultimately transitioned into an artform separate from previously established movements. In other words, as I have argued previously (Weinholtz 2025, 121), although the contemporary artist's book is no longer linked to a specific political agenda, its history predisposes this artform to function as a vehicle for socio-political and cultural critique.

Artists' books often rely on the materiality of the book medium to convey meaning, frequently using self-referential techniques to emphasise their own book-like format (Schmitz-Emans 2019, 48). Despite this, the genre need not always adhere to the traditional codex, or the conventional bound book form (Schmitz-Emans 2019, 26; Drucker 2004, 121). This self-conscious attention to the book structure can manifest itself in artists' books on more than one level, as Drucker further explains:

The book can be examined according to the conventions of the page – and the page in turn examined according to literary and/or visual traditions of form, layout, and illusion. Secondly, the book can be examined as a whole, as an entity, and an object. A book can call attention to the external factors which determine its structure or the book can become an object whose structural features are its subject matter. Finally, a book can be about the process of its own making – either its conception or production, or both. All of these elements can interact, playing with each other across the full field of the book, for instance. (2004, 162)

In other words, consciousness of the material is an integral part of the genre, often relying on this self-reflection on the individual elements of the medium as a means of commenting on the contemporary world (Drucker 2004, 287). As such, towards the end of the twentieth century, an "abrupt political and economic shift" (White 2012, 50) coinciding with the rise of the internet and digital technologies caused the cultural perception of artists' books to transform and allowed the genre to become more accessible. Following this, technological advancements in bookmaking as well as the widespread availability of personal computers revolutionised the production and distribution of artists' books (White 2014, 229;

Schmitz-Emans 2019, 53–54), enabling artists to incorporate digital elements into the creation their work while remaining conceptually linked to the genre.

3. From leak to artist's cookbook

As digital technology advances, it is no surprise that artists continuously adapt their work to incorporate the digital medium, continuing to evolve alongside these changes into the twenty-first century. One such example is the 2016 work titled *The Good Life* by artists Sam Lavigne and Tega Brain, also known as the “Enron Simulator,” a fully digital artwork that “recreate[d] the experience of receiving all 500,000 emails from the Enron email archive via a chronological timescale of the viewer’s choosing” (Lavigne and Brain 2016a). Originally, participants could enrol on *The Good Life*’s website to have these emails delivered to their inbox, with options to receive anywhere from 16,000 emails per day over thirty days to forty-nine emails per day for twenty-eight years.¹ The work utilises a curated version of the Enron email database released following the company’s accounting scandal, refined to enhance accessibility, as described by the artists:

Academics continued the painstaking work of culling and tagging the corpus for years after its release in a monumental collaborative effort to produce the cleanest and most research-friendly archive possible. The version we are using in *The Good Life* [...] was made available by William W. Cohen, professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon, and last updated in 2015. (Lavigne and Brain 2016a)

Whereas *The Good Life* is not necessarily classified as an artist’s book, it directly influenced the production of one, as it was this artwork that inspired artist Demetria Glace² to create and publish *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* (2022) as an artist’s cookbook. In an interview with Mathieu Cénac, co-founder of *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*’s publisher JBE Books, Glace recounts having discovered and registered for *The Good Life* in 2017, after which “one of the emails [she] received, after about five months of getting these emails, was a recipe for a dessert that’s in the book, called ‘bananas foster’” (2021, 9:42–9:53). This discovery sparked her interest in further exploring the Enron database, leading her to investigate other publicly available data leaks in search of recipes (Glace 2021, 10:54–11:01). Her research

¹ The current version of *The Good Life* is still accessible, consisting of a corpus of 225,000 emails and providing the option to receive them chronologically within the span of seven, fourteen, or twenty-eight years (Lavigne and Brain 2016b).

² Demetria Glace is the artistic pseudonym of British human rights researcher Gabriela Ivens. *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* is her debut book.

culminated in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, which features fifty-two recipes³ collected from seven different email leaks.

Before having created the cookbook as well as her artistic pseudonym, Glace debuted her recipe collection at the 2018 International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) as a project called “Leaked Recipes” (IDFA 2018). It was during this time that Glace met Cénac and photographer Emilie Baltz who later contributed to the illustration⁴ of the recipes in the cookbook. Reflecting on her project, Glace recalls hosting themed meals where participants engaged in wider discussions on privacy, security leaks, conspiracy theories, office culture, and gender.

I met Mathieu [Cénac], and actually Emily [Baltz] as well, two years ago at IDFA in Amsterdam in the DocLab performances. They had a theme around cooking, and I was making a cookbook based on recipes I’d found in email leaks. [...] IDFA invited me to do live performances where I would invite a number of people, and we would come and eat the food from these leaks. But we would also talk about the themes that were within them, so obviously privacy, security leaks, and then other themes that came out, like conspiracy theories, office culture, gender dynamics of recipe writing, and the recipes themselves, of course. So, I did about nine different meals, ranging from brunch to high tea, and then two special dinners. The dinners were four courses, and each course had a different theme, and for each dinner around forty people came. (2021, 1:43–3:00)

The transformation from recipe collection to the performance from which Glace’s cookbook emerged reinforces *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*’s status as an artist’s book. From the beginning, the artist’s intention was to create a cookbook as a medium of critique, as evidenced by her performance of thematic meals at the IDFA, which is evocative of the historically activist nature of the genre (Drucker 2004, 287). For instance, the necessity of discussing current notions of privacy is presented in this book through the re-contextualisation of personal information

³ Each of the fifty-two recipes within *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* are similarly presented. As Glace clarifies in the section “How to cook with this cookbook,” despite being evenly formatted, the content of the recipes is not “altered, spellchecked or edited” (2022, 14) in any way, even in instances in which measurements or instructions are partially missing. As such, each recipe includes a title, the subject line from the email conversation where it was found, an ingredients list with (or without) measurements, instructions exactly as they were communicated in the original email, and at times “Chef’s Notes” (Glace 2022, 15) which include any helpful comments written by the email sender about the recipe.

⁴ All recipes are photographed by Baltz, whose images show each dish plated together with office supplies and electronics on top of a silken cream-coloured cloth. For instance, the photograph beside the recipe for “Cheese dip” (Glace 2022, 50) depicts the dish in a white bowl, inside of which four Duracell batteries appear floating in the dip. This unsettling imagery that merges food with the inedible recurs throughout the book, acting perhaps as a reminder that the recipes that we are reading were not meant to be shared with us.

found among the leaked emails, as described by Glace in the introduction of the book:

This is not just a cookbook. This is a collection of emails that were, and are still, publicly available from the last two decades of email leaks, breaches and hacks. It's an insight into office culture, politics, corruption, hacking, family and friendships. The publication of large email databases is often not curated, resulting in important pieces of information being published next to very personal communications, like recipes. (2022, 11)

The medium of the work can likewise be related to this activist stance, as Glace applies the format of the cookbook to emphasise the socio-cultural context surrounding the recipe exchanges and each mass email release. This is not unlike Theophano's reading of women's cookbooks as social and political commentary, in which she writes that "the genre of cookery literature — and the terms of kitchen practice — have provided a vehicle for constructing, defending, and transgressing social and cultural borders" (2016, chap. 7). In this sense, through the cookbook format, Glace draws on such activist possibilities of the cookery literature genre, which Theophano observes to have historically been chosen by "women of diverse experiences and backgrounds [...] as a suitable place to probe issues of social and cultural identity" (2016, chap. 7). Indeed, Glace invokes this usage of the cookbook which, although not typical, allows for a means to critique social issues.

Additionally, as it often is the case with other artists' books, the material conventions of the genre are not only upheld by the curation of recipes into a cookbook, but also accentuated by the self-reflexive aspect of including the accompanying leaked emails. These can include personal comments solely intended for the recipient, such as "I don't usually bake them, but my grandma does" (Glace 2022, 59) beneath the recipe for "Spicy oatsquares," which highlight the dichotomy of publishing conversations that were meant for a private audience. Considering that "when a book calls attention to the conceits and conventions by which it normally effaces its identity, then it performs a theoretical operation" (Drucker 2004, 161), the cookbook form evidently acts as an agent for social commentary in the case of *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, the extent of which can be determined in the examination of its approach to politically charged themes.

4. Privacy in leaked recipes

Demetria Glace's *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* is divided into two main sections, the first half containing the fifty-two recipes sourced from various leaked email exchanges. The recipes are grouped by type of dish, arranged into the following categories: breakfast, sauces and salad dressings, dips, sides, soup and pie, pasta, fish and shellfish, meat, and desserts. Having been sourced from email leaks that originated primarily from the United States, the majority of the recipes in the book are written by North Americans. Glace addresses this, acknowledging for instance that some of the ingredients, such as Velveeta cheese⁵, may be difficult to find outside the United States (2022, 14–15). As such, each recipe includes internationally available alternatives⁶ for such ingredients, as well as imperial and metric measurement conversions.

In her introduction to the cookbook, Glace explains that no modifications were made to these recipes to preserve “the same experience and emotions that [she] had, and that the person who received the email may have also felt” (2022, 14). Each dish is photographed by Emilie Baltz, with visuals arranged on office supplies and computer hardware from the 2000s and 2010s, reflecting the era of the featured data breaches. The second half, titled “Leaked Menus,” compiles these recipes alongside the stories and email conversations in which they were shared. Like Glace's identically titled earlier performance at IDFA, where she hosted meals using leaked recipes, these collections are grouped by themes, from secret recipe exchanges to those that inspired conspiracy theories.

A central theme in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* is privacy and how public data breaches affect individuals. In one of the featured cases, namely the Sony Pictures 2014 hack, Glace highlights how company executive Michael Linton reportedly advised staff members to not read the leaked emails, due to “their

⁵ In a footnote beneath the recipe for “Cheese dip,” for example, Glace further clarifies that “Velveeta cheese is hard to find outside of North America,” adding that it is possible to make a substitute at home by following a recipe she found online, posted by Diana Rattray (Glace 2022, 50), which Glace proceeds to transcribe in its entirety in the footnote. Interestingly, as this recipe for Velveeta cheese is entirely within one footnote, the paragraph breaks are substituted by the pilcrow symbol (¶), a typographical character used to identify a paragraph (*Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. “pilcrow (n.),” accessed June 9, 2025, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pilcrow>), to maintain a similar structure to that of the primary recipe. This footnote recipe is repeated throughout the cookbook under every recipe that requires Velveeta cheese as an ingredient, such as the recipe for “Chili beef with cheese dip” (Glace 2022, 53).

⁶ For instance, while the recipe for praline sauce calls for “ $\frac{1}{8}$ cup (45 g) light corn syrup” (Glace 2022, 33), the cookbook includes in a footnote that this can be replaced with honey.

potentially divisive effects internally and externally” (2022, 179), a request most Sony employees effectively ignored. Consequently, the artist contemplates the reason behind the human instinct to breach others’ privacy, acknowledging her own urge to do so during the recipe selection process:

When I was writing this cookbook, I tried to read only the emails with recipes in them, but on some occasions I got swept up in a few of the stories. I felt icky about this and was relieved to go back to the government released Enron emails, feeling more comfortable as I felt they took the responsibility from me. (Glance 2022, 179)

In this instance, the artist highlights the irony in her reluctance to read personal information from the Sony email database, as it had been illegally leaked by a hacker group,⁷ in contrast with the Enron emails which were legally released by a U.S. government agency. A recurring motif in this cookbook is this criticism of the indiscriminate, and often government-endorsed “publication of large email databases [...], resulting in important pieces of information being published next to very personal communications, like recipes” (Glance 2022, 11). Indeed, through the private exchanges accompanying each shared recipe, the reader learns details about the personal lives of the individuals involved in each leak. Notably, cookbooks have historically reflected one’s personal lives, particularly their social status (Mennell 1996, 231; Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo 1992, 11) or domestic gender roles (Mennell 1996, 38). Similarly, Theophano considers the role of the cookbook as a form of autobiography, specifically in reference to women’s recipe annotations and instructions⁸, writing that “[s]elf-conscious or not, recording everyday acts of cookery is an act of autobiographical writing and self-representation” (2016, chap. 4). In *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, one such instance is the email conversation surrounding the sharing of the “Sweet pumpkin dip” recipe (Glance 2022, 125) between two Enron employees, one of whom writes:

⁷ The 2014 Sony Pictures leak was perpetrated by the hacker group Guardians of the People as an attempt to halt the production of a comedy film about North Korea titled *The Interview* (Glance 2022, 159).

⁸ Theophano further describes the phenomenon of the autobiographical cookbook as follows: “With the brief recipe texts and saved paper remnants, the writer constructs an image of herself, most often in keeping with society’s values but here and there in defiance of them. Strictly speaking, of course, cookbooks are not autobiographies, yet they are opportunities for women to capture aspects of the work that they do, itself evanescent and often unnoticed.” (2016, chap. 4). In this sense, the recipe books ultimately carry the potential to portray glimpses into their writer’s personal lives through their annotations or cooking directions, which is not unlike the case of *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*.

I really enjoy the newsletter and will be happy to remain in this [editor] position for next year (if you'd like me to!). With my advertising/journalism background – although it's been a lot of years since I've used it very much – this is just my “thing”. And with such rapid changes in technology, it's a challenge to learn new skills! (Glance 2022, 194)

This brief exchange from 23 October 2001 transforms beyond a simple recipe trade, as the realisation of its timing — only a month before the scandal and subsequent bankruptcy of the Enron Corporation — causes the reader to empathise with and consider the specific effects of the company's corruption on the email writer. In this sense, the email exchanges published in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, albeit censored by Glance to maintain the email writers' anonymity, are reminiscent of the genre of the food memoir. Defined as “the kind of culinary memoir that chronicles the growth and development of the memoirist through the lens of food memories” (Waxman 2008, 364), the food memoir resembles Glance's cookbook to a certain extent, despite the latter not referencing any childhood formative experiences⁹. For instance, as shown in the excerpt above, this cookbook can function as a form of the chronicling of events in a person's life and personal memory as recounted by their sharing of recipes. In addition to positioning the individuals' experiences in relation to the circumstances of the data breaches, *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* produces an autobiographical portrayal of the email writers' lives through the lens of culinary exchange.

Through the creation of the cookbook, Glance further comments on privacy issues caused by the indiscriminate publication of large email databases, beginning with the process of obtaining consent from those affected by the email leak, as she explains in the introduction:

I contacted as many of the recipe writers as possible to ask for their permission to include their recipes in this cookbook. Resulting in many people receiving what must have been a very strange email. In some cases I was even able to speak with a few people over the phone about their recipes and their experiences of being involved in an email leak. (2022, 11)

⁹ Waxman considers “the most fully conceived form of the food memoir” to be the chronicling of the memoirist's development from childhood to adulthood (2008, 364). Despite this, *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* presents further similarities to the food memoir according to Theophano, who writes that “[u]nlike a work of fiction that may or may not resemble the world of the author, cookbooks, as memoirs, are saturated with the vivid details of the author's everyday reality” (2016, chap. 4). Reiteratively, this refers to the idea that recipes can often shed light on their authors' lives, either through the foods they eat, or the texts and anecdotes that accompany the cooking instructions. In the case of Glance's cookbook, this manifests itself primarily in the content and context of the email exchanges within which the recipes were originally shared.

In doing so, Glace provides these individuals with an opportunity to consent to the inclusion of their recipes in a curated format, while censoring private or personally identifiable information. In this way, the cookbook critiques the dehumanisation of the affected individuals, whose personal information was circulated without their approval. In the cookbook, an instance of this is the way in which the release of the Enron emails is contextualised, regarding its impact on former employees whose personal information was exposed. When the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission published the 500,000 Enron emails, they reportedly released the following statement:

The release of the information now will enable the public to understand better the evidentiary record on which the Commission’s decisions in those proceedings are grounded. The Commission may release the information if the public’s right to disclosure outweighs the individual’s right to privacy. (Glace 2022, 165)

While this government agency objectifies the individuals involved by prioritising transparency over privacy, in response *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* emphasises the recipe writers’ right to privacy. In this manner, Glace critiques such leaks which claim to promote transparency, but ultimately expose trivial personal details in the process. One similar example explored in the cookbook is the commonly named “Macronleaks,” in which emails from French presidential candidate Emmanuel Macron’s campaign were hacked in 2017 (Glace 2022, 155). While the Macronleaks were speculated to have been published as an attempt to disrupt the politician’s campaign, the hacks were allegedly poorly executed and ultimately revealed no incriminating evidence (Glace 2022, 155), therefore failing to create any controversy. Nevertheless, amidst publicly available the emails from the Macronleaks is a recipe for “Pasta bolognese” (Glace 2022, 157). Although this recipe is not one of the fifty-two included in the first portion of the cookbook, Glace includes it in the original email within one of the “Leaked Menus” chapters, titled “This Menu Gets My Vote.” Originally written in French, the recipe reads in its entirety as follows:

Pasta bolognese

From:¹⁰

¹⁰ Throughout *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, names of every sender and receiver is redacted with a black censor bar to protect their privacy. However, it is important to note that this information is

To:
 Date: 2011-06-12 08:20
 Subject: Re:

je pars dan 10 minutes, donc tu peux commencer à faire chauffer l'eau, et dans le fait tout tu peux mettre deux ou trois steaks hachés à cuir, et on fait mijoter avec la sauce après. n'oublies pas sel et thym. PAS DE FOLIE, NI D'INVENTIONS CULINAIRES DE TOUTES SORTES¹¹ (Glance 2022, 157)

As an exchange that likely took place between an office worker about to return home, and a member of their household¹², this recipe functions as an example of the type of everyday email exchange needlessly made public by the leaks. Structurally, it differs from the remaining recipes in the cookbook, as it lacks an ingredients list, measurements, and chronological step-by-step instructions. Despite not belonging to the main section of recipes, the inclusion of “Pasta bolognese” within the “Leaked Menus” chapters ultimately emphasises Glance’s criticism of the unnecessary sharing of personal information with the public through these email leaks.

Fundamentally, Glance makes use of the format of the artist’s cookbook to produce political commentary on themes of privacy, memory and corruption. Evidently, this act of artistic social commentary in book form is invocative of the conventions of the artist’s book, a genre frequently associated with “politically motivated art activity and activist production” (Drucker 2004, 2). Accordingly, Glance’s curation of leaked recipes into the cookbook format, in connection with the personal narratives behind them, functions as an activist artwork that critiques the impersonal nature of large-scale data disclosures, while humanising those affected by these breaches.

5. Gender and recipe collecting

The idea that “knowledge about food is inseparable from social, political, historical, economic, and cultural contexts” (Dusselier 2009, 332) is further examined in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, as Glance discusses how recipe sharing can reflect one’s

not censored in the publicly available leaked email databases, which is one of the points that Glance critiques in her artist’s cookbook.

¹¹ “I’m leaving in 10 minutes, so you can start heating the water, and you can cook two or three hamburgers, then simmer them in the sauce. don’t forget the salt and thyme. NO CRAZY IDEAS OR CULINARY INVENTIONS OF ANY KIND.” (my translation)

¹² Whether playful or commanding, the capitalised sentence at the end of the email, in particular, points towards a certain sense of intimacy or familiarity between the sender and recipient.

cultural environment and identity. Mennell describes how food consumption and cooking “become woven into the mythology and sense the identity of nations, social classes and religious groups” (1996, 3), in addition to being “bound up with [people’s] personal identity and social origins” (1996, 317). This connection between food and identity is similarly described by Theophano in relation to gender, as women have historically relied on cookbooks and recipe collecting to transport collective memory across generations (2016, chap. 2). This connection between “food, life experiences, memory, collective histories, and identity formation” (Dusselier 2009, 334–35) is explored in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* through its discussion of the relationship between cooking and gender.

In her discussion in one of her “Leaked Menus” chapters, titled “The Office,” Glace references an unnamed study of the Enron email database, noting that male employees were involved in the data leak at twice the rate of their female counterparts, yet she also observes that 56% of the recipes shared throughout the entire collection of emails came from women (2022, 172). Accordingly, this reflects the conventional idea that women are primarily responsible for the domestic act of cooking (Theophano 2016, chap. 1; Mennell 1996, 201; Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo 1992, 91), which in turn stems from the historically “gendered division of private and public spheres that left women few opportunities beyond the housewife role” (Williams 2014, 59). In other words, due to this societal division in the home, cooking and recipe collecting is, even today, an activity often associated with women.

In *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, this link between gender and the domestic sphere is reflected both through the act of recipe sharing, as well as in the content of the exchanges themselves. Within the email corpus featured in the cookbook, women not only contribute most recipes, but also take on the role of domestic managers. As Glace notes, “many of the female recipe writers were the ones coordinating dinner parties, or sharing recipes forgotten by their male partner (of those emails that were organising others or events, 14 of them were written by women versus one that was written by a man)” (2022, 172). Such exchanges, found throughout the several email leaks, indicate that, despite their participation in the workforce, women tendentially continue to shoulder more domestic responsibilities than men. The act of cooking, particularly, tends to function primarily as a domestic duty for women, as previous research “suggests that men may find cooking more

leisurely than women because they have more choice about when they do it, and because their cooking is more self/leisure-oriented than other/care-oriented” (Szabo 2013, 625). In this sense, men’s cooking tends to be considered leisurely and not necessarily connected to the keeping of the domestic sphere. As such, it is no surprise that the title of professional chef is more often attributed to men, while women rarely ascend beyond the role of domestic cook (Mennell 1996, 201).

Despite this, traditional gender roles tied to the private sphere are not solely reinforced by society, but also by women themselves, as evidenced by some instances in the cookbook. For example, when coordinating a workplace event and assigning a chocolate cake recipe titled “Death by chocolate” (Glance 2022, 130), a female Enron employee writes the following comment in an email: “The dessert recipe should perhaps not be given to a single male as it requires a springform pan (an item I’m guessing is not common to most bachelor kitchens)” (Glance 2022, 172). Out of all the recipes in *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*, “Death by chocolate” has one of the most detailed cooking instructions, including information that other recipes in the book tend to omit, such as oven temperature and the size of the springform pan. This is particularly noticeable, as other recipes occasionally have missing information, as Glance denotes (2022, 14), on account of having been shared informally between coworkers. Accordingly, this could also be attributed to women still being expected to perform domestic roles, such as recipe exchanging (Theophano 2016, chap. 1), to the best of their ability, even in the workplace.

Once again, evocative of the food memoir, this individual divulges their personal bias regarding cooking and the enforcement of gendered domestic roles, which could be indicative of their history. Such indicators related to food practices often portray institutionalised perspectives on oppression, as “[c]lose attention to who is cooking what, for whom, and under what conditions can break down totalizing notions of gender, race, and class” (Avakian 2014, 281). Szabo further elaborates on how cultural background can influence personal perspectives on the act of cooking:

Approach to cooking is also influenced by family background as it relates to gender, race and class privilege. Cooking may feel more oppressive to those from poorer and racialized groups, especially women, who have been historically positioned as domestic workers, and this approach may be passed down to younger relatives. (2013, 636)

The notion of intrinsic gender roles in relation to cooking and food culture can also be encountered in diet culture, a topic which *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* likewise explores. Dieting, which has been critically described in academic discourse as “a normative practice targeting the female, white, middle-class body alone, with the explicit intention of molding it into arbitrary beauty standards and distracting women from more profound, political goals” (Vester 2010, 39), first appears in the cookbook in an email accompanying a recipe for “Oat pancakes” (Glance 2022, 20). The recipe features ingredients usually associated with dieting, such as sweetener brand Splenda instead of sugar, and the brand of margarine spray I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter as an alternative to butter. This margarine spray is pictured in the illustration of the dish, in which a bottle of I Can’t Believe It’s Not Butter lies beside a stack of oat pancakes and CDs. The photograph also depicts a workout dumbbell next to the dish, emphasising the associations between the recipe and weight loss. Glance contextualises this recipe, further linking it to the idea of diet culture:

The first is a pancake recipe adapted from the Greysheet cookbook by a personal chef to a high-up exec at the film studio Sony. This exec was often looking for low-calorie options and employed the New York-based chef to send her meal plans and diet versions of the food she loves. [...] Taking its name from the colour of the paper it was printed on, the Grey Sheet became one of the most popular and controversial of all the food plans distributed in Overeaters Anonymous, a group formed to follow a 12-step recovery process similar to Alcoholics Anonymous. (2022, 159)

Adding to the socio-cultural significance to the “Oat pancakes” recipe, the context of the emails highlights the gendered dynamics of contemporary food culture related to dieting. This is also indicated in the content email exchange, which specifies that this recipe corresponds to “the daily allowance of three tablespoons of bran” (Glance 2022, 160), further emphasising the strictness of dietary regimes usually associated with women’s weight control. Indeed, eating disorders motivated by weight loss have been linked to gender, as we live in “a social climate in which thinness is synonymous with female beauty, [and] the majority of women report that they would like to be thinner and attempt to restrict their food intake in response to social pressures” (Mennell, Murcott, and van Otterloo 1992, 51). In this sense, only by including the email conversation and additional context behind this recipe exchange does *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* provide a criticism of the gendered implications of dieting, which Glance accentuates by mentioning the Overeaters

Anonymous dieting group and their similarities to the Alcoholics Anonymous in both name and function.

However, while it is often argued that such “dieting practices were introduced to divert women’s demands for access to social power” (Vester 2010, 39), this has not always been the case in history. Initially, as Vester explains, in the late nineteenth century dieting was promoted as a form of self-discipline associated with masculinity, which was only later appropriated by women’s rights activists as an act of emancipation and a means to resist their contemporary standards of female beauty (2010, 58). Evidently, women’s rights activists, and later feminists as well, have long been involved with culinary discourse, highlighting its activist potential. In the late twentieth-century, after second-wave feminists¹³ had become stereotyped as women who refused to cook, some activist groups began publishing cookbooks to raise funds as well as to disseminate the idea that the responsibility of cooking belongs to both men and women (Williams 2014, 60). The publishing of cookbooks as a form of activism was also adopted by LGBTQ+ feminist groups, with one notable example from the 1980s created to contradict the stereotype which assumed that feminist lesbians could not, or refused to cook:

In 1983 a lesbian feminist group, the Cincinnati Lesbian Activist Bureau, published a cookbook called *Whoever Said Dykes Can't Cook?* This cookbook raised money for the group, but it also aimed to prove that lesbian feminists cooked – and enjoyed it. (Williams 2014, 59)

With its commentary on the institutionalised gender dynamics of cooking and dieting, *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* certainly aligns with this feminist-leaning approach to cookbook publishing. Not only is Glace’s work associated with politically driven activity due to its genre as an artist’s book, but its deliberate curation to include topics of femininity and female oppression in cooking and food culture evidences how the format of the cookbook is utilised as a vehicle of feminist activism.

An additional indication of this is Glace’s self-admitted vegetarianism, writing in the book’s introductory section: “I have cooked nearly all the recipes in this book. For those I couldn’t cook myself, as a vegetarian, I asked trusted loved ones to cook the meat, fish and shellfish recipes” (Glace 2022, 14). While *The*

¹³ Second-wave feminism refers to feminists who were active in the 1960s, 70s and 80s (Williams 2014, 59).

Leaked Recipes Cookbook still includes non-vegetarian recipes, the artist's vegetarianism can be evocative of feminists involved in similar culinary discourse, who advocated against eating animal products "because they saw similarities between a patriarchal society that oppressed women and a food system that oppressed animals" (Williams 2014, 60). Considering the curated format of Glace's work, "the compiled cookbook reflects what is eaten in the home. It is, in a sense, an autobiography. Perhaps unintentionally, compilers create a composite picture of what they allegedly eat" (Ireland 1981, 108). Whereas this fails to apply to Glace regarding the non-vegetarian recipes, the accompanying email conversations thus become a highlighted element in the book. Indeed, Glace's choice to include recipes for foods she cannot eat places exceptional emphasis on these email exchanges and, consequently, on the politically motivated commentary within the cookbook.

6. Conclusion

The Leaked Recipes Cookbook functions as an artwork that invokes conventions from several genres, from the compiled cookbook to the food memoir and, most prominently, the artist's book. Manifesting itself as a form of socio-political commentary that critiques issues surrounding privacy, gender dynamics, and the role of art as an agent of social change, Glace's work reconstructs publicly leaked emails into an exploration of how personal and mundane exchanges, like the sharing of recipes, can act as a form of socio-political statement through the arts.

By curating recipes from leaked emails, which range from corporate hacks to political scandals, Glace comments on the indiscriminate release of personal information, questioning the idea that the public's right to government transparency outweighs individuals' right to privacy. Through a contextualisation of each recipe, accompanied by the personal email exchanges in which these recipes were shared, Glace critiques the way in which individuals' private lives are dehumanised and publicly disseminated as a response to narratives of corporate wrongdoing and governmental transparency. These exchanges ultimately incorporate a certain autobiographical character, due to the personal nature of the recipe exchanges at times chronicling individual email writer's life events.

A comment on contemporary gender dynamics is likewise present in Glace's commentary, as she explores how recipe-sharing reflects cultural expectations about women's roles in both domestic and professional spaces. The cookbook also

considers the topic of dieting in relation to gender, highlighting how low-calorie recipes shared in the leaks reflect societal pressures placed on women to adhere to contemporary standards of womanhood, thus revealing how food exchanges can provide a critique of gendered body politics.

The cookbook format itself plays a significant role in the work's cultural impact, serving as a vehicle for activism and socio-political critique. By choosing the artist's (cook)book as her medium, Glace calls upon the legacy of the politically motivated nature of artists' books, artworks "conceived as agents of political persuasion and as vehicles to advocate a change of consciousness or policy in some area of contemporary life" and which "make use of elements of production to communicate their position in a way which invests heavily in aesthetics" (Drucker 2004, 287). Fundamentally, the act of curating and publishing recipes from leaked emails becomes a form of activism, with Glace not only preserving these exchanges but also giving voice to those affected by data leaks, thus firmly situating *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook* in the activist tradition of the artist's book.

References

- Avakian, Arlene. 2014. "Cooking Up Lives: Feminist Food Memoirs." *Feminist Studies* 40 (2): 277–303.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.15767/feministstudies.40.2.277>.
- Burkhart, Anne. 2007. "Articulate Activism: Artists' Books Take Issues." *Art Education* 60, no. 1 (January): 25–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00043125.2007.11651623>.
- Drucker, Johanna. 2004. *The Century of Artists' Books*. 2nd ed. New York: Granary Books.
- Dusselier, Jane. 2009. "Understandings of Food as Culture." *Environmental History* 14, no. 2 (April): 331–338. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608476>.
- Glace, Demetria. 2021. "It's time to cook the conspiracy!" Interview by JBE Books. Streamed live on February 25, 2021. YouTube video, 59:19.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSms3Ng_ksg.
- Glace, Demetria. 2022. *The Leaked Recipes Cookbook*. 2nd ed. Paris: JBE Books.
- IDFA. 2018. "Leaked Recipes." Festival history. Accessed July 12, 2024.
<https://www.idfa.nl/en/film/fl1e6fff3-d562-4d1a-8fb4-315bd2ec95d0/leaked-recipes/>.

- Ireland, Lynne. 1981. "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography." *Western Folklore* 40, no. 1 (January): 107–114.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1499855>.
- Lavigne, Sam and Tega Brain. 2016a. "Simulating Enron: The undead corpus of emails from a massive corporate fraud." *Rhizome*, November 21, 2016.
<https://rhizome.org/editorial/2016/nov/21/simulating-enron/>.
- Lavigne, Sam and Tega Brain. 2016b. *The Good Life (Enron Simulator)*.
 Accessed July 10, 2024. <https://enron.email>.
- Lyons, Joan. 1987. "Introduction and Acknowledgements." In *Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook*, edited by Joan Lyons, 7–9. New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press.
- Mennell, Stephen. 1996. *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. 2nd ed. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Mennell, Stephen, Anne Murcott, and Anneke H. van Otterloo. 1992. *The Sociology of Food: Eating, Diet and Culture*. London/Newbury Park/New Dehli: SAGE Publications.
- Schmitz-Emans, Monika, ed. 2019. *Literatur, Buchgestaltung und Buchkunst: Ein Kompendium*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110528299>.
- Szabo, Michelle. 2013. "Foodwork or Foodplay? Men's Domestic Cooking, Privilege and Leisure." *Sociology* 47, no. 4 (August): 623–38.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/24433222>.
- Theophano, Janet. 2016. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. Kindle.
- Vester, Katharina. 2010. "Regime Change: Gender, Class, and the Invention of Dieting in Post-Bellum America." *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 1 (Fall): 39–70. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40802108>.
- Waxman, Barbara Frey. 2008. "Food Memoirs: What They Are, Why They Are Popular, and Why They Belong in the Literature Classroom." *College English* 70, no. 4 (March): 363–383. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472276>.
- Weinholtz, Teresa. 2025. "A.R.t distorting reality: augmented immateriality in Mixed Signals by kennedy+swan." *Diffractions*, no. 9 (February), 117–35.
<https://doi.org/10.34632/diffractions.2025.16140>.

White, Tony. 2012. "From Democratic Multiple to Artist Publishing: The (R)Evolutionary Artist's Book." *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 31, no. 1 (Spring): 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.1086/664913>.

White, Tony. 2014. "The Evolution of Artists' Publishing." *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 33, no. 2 (September): 227–242. <https://doi.org/10.1086/678548>.

Williams, Stacy J. "A Feminist Guide to Cooking." *Contexts* 13, no. 3 (Summer): 59–61. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24710554>.