

THE PLUMBER AND THE COOK

So let's say that we are in a Western metropolis, and that we have been spending the last several hours in front of our computer. That's a likely enough scenario isn't it? So we walk out the door to grab some lunch. Splitting our attention between our smartphone and the street, we still catch a glimpse of an old loud van passing by. It has been subjected to a full vehicle wrap and sports digitally produced images of copper pipes and big ripe droplets of water that look ready to burst in all their faux 3-dimensionality. The pipes spell out the name of a company: Pompeii Plumbing. That's something! 600 BC and the age of the Cloaca Maxima for example.

Maybe we think of that old cranky and out of touch politician who years back was ridiculed for his remarks on the Internet. What did he say again? We google.

Oh yes: "the Internet is not something that you just dump something on. It's not a big truck. It's a series of tubes".

A series of tubes?! Really? This ethereal web, this intimate extension of our nervous systems, which has come to resemble the air we breathe. That's like reducing sex to genitalia, or religion to votive candles.

We arrive at the restaurant. It has an open kitchen centrally in the main space with a bunch of good looking, mostly male chefs and sous chefs in full attire acting out their well known ritual with just enough speed to convey a thrilling atmosphere of urgency. We are shown to a seat at one of the long communal wooden tables. We order the unripe strawberries, cress and buttermilk with a glass of Sauvageonne from les Griottes in Anjou and then read whatever news our friends on Facebook are into. Then we have chicken wings with white asparagus and anchovies, pay, throw our stained napkin on the floor - maybe we check out the plumbing - and head back.

Work uniforms are so weird. Equal parts anachronistic children-

book naivety and Village People camp-ness. The cook parades the traditional "chef's whites", an image of cleanliness: a thick bleached double-breasted cotton jacket (reversible so as to conceal stains), hounds tooth checkered pants to obscure sullyng, an apron to shield from splatters, and, of course, the tall, round, pleated, and starched bright white toque. The plumber, clasping his enormous red adjustable pipe wrench, is outfitted in a boilersuit, the classic coveralls of messy business. His uniform is blue in order to remind clients of his mastery of the water. But we all know that is not the only element the plumber handles.

The cook's motivation is not subsistence, but stimulation. The necessity of maintaining energy for the body is replaced by the contingent and virtual aesthetics of taste. If the cook deals in the erotic and in images, serving up styles to be swallowed, spicing up sustenance with symbolism, the plumber is the perverted pornographer, the surreptitious one who visits bored wives and lays some pipe while their spouts are at work.

We open our laptop, but the Internet has broken down as it occasionally does, and the cable guy comes. After checking out the premises he explains that our neighbor

must have cut through the wires while burying his dog, an old sweet Labrador, who sadly passed away the day before. While he fixes it, going at the cable with a hacksaw, we stop thinking about the Internet as a cloud.

Really the Internet is crudely material, it exists in real places, it smells like real things, it breaks, and has varying widths of pipes. Its tubes are strung out across the globe, creating occasional heaping piles of network cables. "The data center mille-feuille."

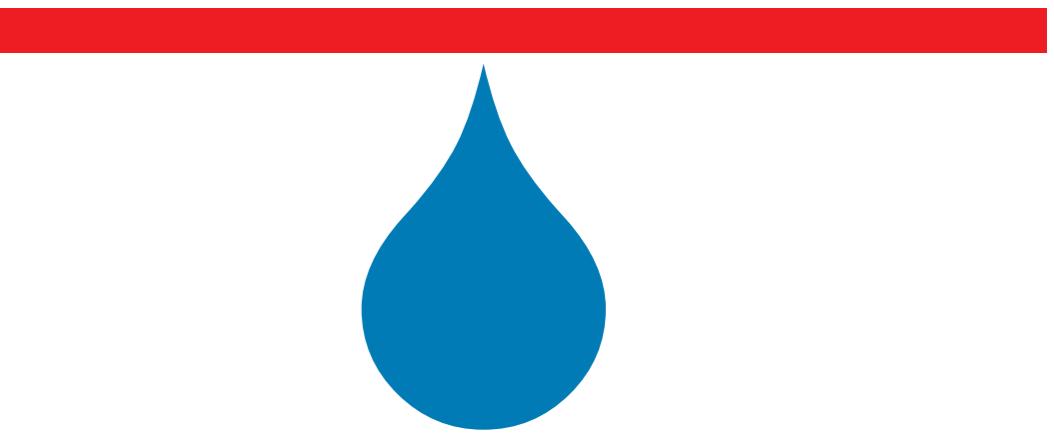
So how about this: A white hat with a full-pouched crown, a sign for the inheritance of French culinary hierarchy and standards, pierced through with the plumber's industrial age red pipe wrench: "Oh non, c'est la fin des haricots!". From its claws emanates two teardrops: the first, in yellow, is the output, the discharge, the waste; while the second, in blue, is the input, the source. In this minimal ideogram, the refined and the profane enter into a bond, a pact of production, preparation, presentation and preservation.

NOW WE'RE COOKING WITH GAS.

"Hammer & sickle" or "square & compasses". "Hoe, rifle & book". And then here: "toque & pipe wrench". What kind of alliance would such a symbol entail? Does the emblem imply a business, and what kind of services would such a company provide? Or could it be a guild, a trade union, a secret society, or a nation state? The costume and the tool, image and function, the virtual and the physical, the culinary and crap, an association of associations. The functioning body in all its monstrosity commingling with the erotic and the image. Excretion and appropriation.

What vegetable do we need a plumber for?

A leek.



Post Brothers & Simon Dybbroe Møller 2015