

performing gastronomy

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As an academic field that does not currently exist in a broad sense, gastronomy is what Hans-Jörg Rheinberger has described as an “epistemic thing.” Such objects of inquiry are vague, characterized more by voids than by specifics, and come into being through various material and discursive acts. J.L. Austin famously discussed the “performative speech act”: words that, when spoken aloud and within felicitous conditions, *do* something (e.g. marry a couple, christen a ship). Within the context of my PhD in Gastronomy, via Concordia’s Special Individualized Program, delivering a conference paper or writing a comprehensive exam thereby becomes what might be termed a *performative text act*: the material-discursive actualization of academic gastronomy. This piece documents the visual insignificance and relative silence of two such text acts, performed respectively on 2/27/2012 and 5/1–3/2012, and which in turn performed gastronomy. It is inspired by John Cage’s composition, *4’33”*, and invites the perceiver to reflect on what constitutes academic practice, and how it comes to be legitimized.

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