

The Belly of an Artist by Stephen Eastaugh

Artists have been romanticized as gastronomic hedons and barflies – and with some reason. Situationist plots were brewed in Parisian coffee shops, abstract expressionism fermented in New York's Cedar Tavern, while Australian figuration rose Phoenix-like from the ashes of a hundred Fitzroy barbecues. However, a taste for the exotic has led some artists further afield. From Iceland to Brazil, Stephen Eastaugh's craving has driven him in search of the secret ingredient to his art: food. ■

I have non-stop jetlag. It's like a slight nausea caused by movement through life and influenced by mortality or the factor of time. Travel could explain this state of mind, but I am certain that others – who do not greedily accumulate kilometers and visas as I do – recognize this illness within themselves.

This jetlag has become a comfortable illness which I simply need to feed. It is an obsession.

I am possessed by minimal possessions to ease my take-off. I am bewitched by pilgrimages to dumb deities. I am lured to astonishing cities, affected by magnificent landscapes and engrossed by airport coffee. This jolly sickness is unreasonable, dominating, inescapable and insatiable, just as all passions should be.

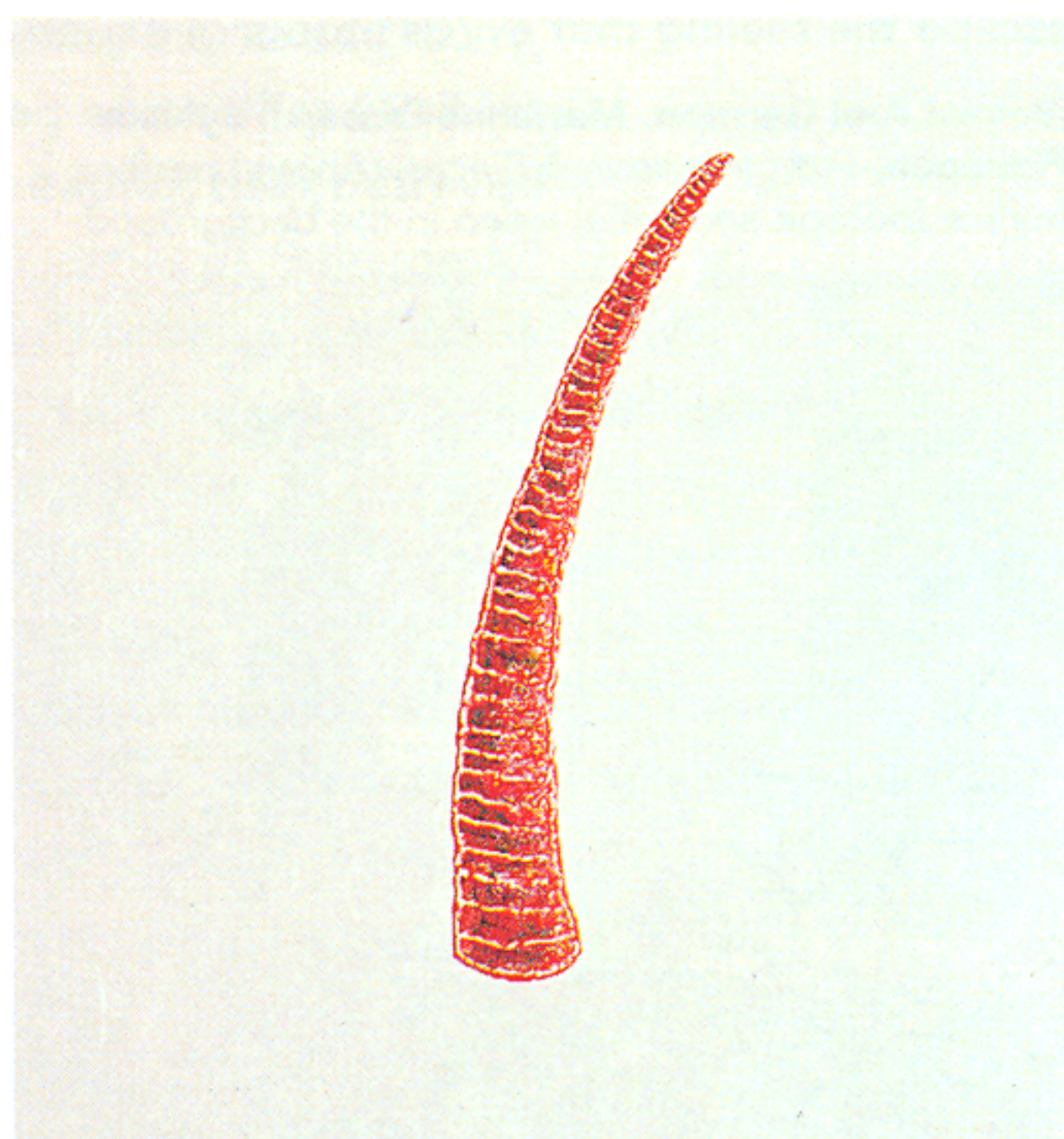
While on my journeys I view a planet full of people that is both an awesome shrine of worship and a clogged toilet. But what is it I search for in Ouagadougou or Narsarsuaq? What do I find in New York or Hong Kong? "It's the same. Same but different," as a Bulgarian friend reminds me. With luck, I am looking for what I find, but this is not always the story.

Of course, with this wanderlust I search for stimuli, experience and inspiration to feed my art, but the body must also be fed. Everyone is hungry for something.

The mind/body can display hunger ranging from a psychopathic cannibalistic frenzy for blood to a meager peckishness for a sweet. This broad spectrum of craving that we are so wonderful at expressing through art and other outlets seems necessary for our survival.

Whether it be craving for meaning, sex, food or whatever... we want, we need, we know this and we show this.

I won't elaborate on the links between my hunger for travel and art. This is a well-



Slippery food makes you forget, sticky food makes you remember. 1989, wax encaustic, enamel, oil stick, 21 x 21 in.

trodden topic. Instead, I wish to offer you a smorgasbord of recipes that have either quashed or created another form of hunger.

• Burkina Faso Crunchy Insects:

Oil; salt; insects. Deep-fry small locusts until black. Add salt. (Not unlike burnt toast.)

• Sri-Lankan Jackfruit Mash:

Ripe Jackfruit; salt; pepper; chili. Boil flesh of fruit until tender. Add spices. Mash then re-heat in pan. Sculpt as desired.

• Icelandic Singed Sheep Head

Sheephead; salt; brennivin (local spirit). Barbecue sheephead until cheeks tender and head blackened by smoke. No hair should be remaining. Serve with local aquavit spirit.

• Australian (Melville Island) Yuli

Collect thick worms from rotting tree trunks in mangroves (with permission from the Tiwi people). Add nothing and eat live. Excellent for your health I am told.

• Brazilian Piranha Soup

Piranha fish; green vegetables; carrots; yams; onions; salt; pepper; chili; ginger; lemon or lime. Boil whole fish in vegetable stock with spices and pieces of ginger. Add fresh vegetables. Remove bones. Slice lemon or lime as garnish. Apparently the head is an aphrodisiac.

• Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) Narwhal

Fresh or frozen Narwhal blubber sliced into one centimeter cubes. Can be chewed for some hours. Excellent texture.

• Cook Islands Raw Fish

Fresh fish; coconut milk; lime juice; onions; tomatoes; salt; pepper; chili. Chop tomatoes and onions. Add to coconut milk along with lime juice spices and strips of raw fish. Marinate for one hour. Serve with boiled Taro and salad.

• Norwegian 'home burnt' coffee

Strong black coffee; veterinarian disinfectant or 100% alcohol. Add a small amount of extremely strong alcohol to coffee. Ideal as an accompaniment to a meal of elk and potatoes.

Food is a biological obsession. It is primary. It passes through the fragile flesh border of my skin at the (some would say lax) customs office of my mouth and quickly assimilates. My body reminds me that I have hunger, my jetlag reminds me that I am transient. Do I wish to be reminded of my fragility via my body's wants and weaknesses?

A Cook Islander mother once told me, "Slippery food makes you forget, and sticky food makes you remember." So shall I eat bananas or Taro? Bon appetite/voyage. (W)