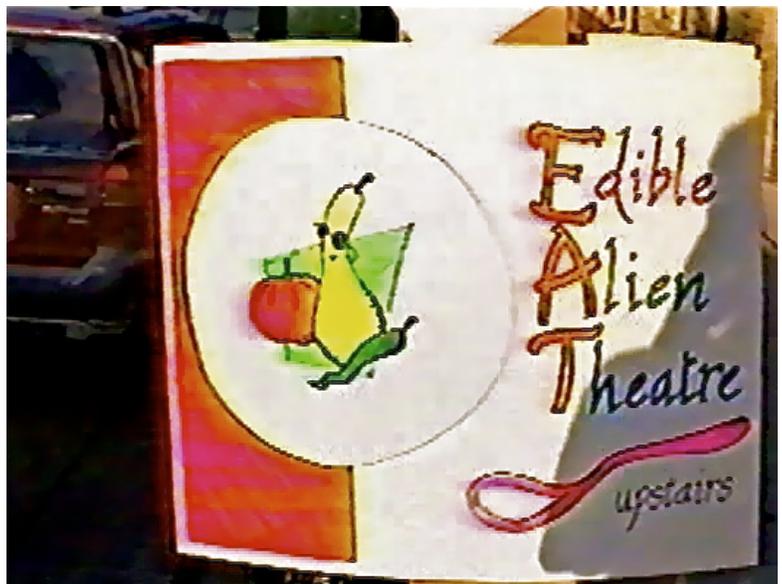


# Edible Alien Theatre

Edible Alien Theatre produces one-of-a-kind events that transform Environments and combine Food with Performance Art to help usher people into a greater enjoyment of all. We are lovers of creative revelation rooted in tradition and experimentation. We let the Stories and the Food be reintroduced as threads in the fabric of our worlds, allowing us to reconstruct ourselves.

Eating is  
Performance  
Enjoying is an  
Art



Why bother? Mostly because it's fun---and any fun that we have comes through to the audience for an evening. We're an odd mix of people with an odd mix of talents that likes to explore spaces, stories, absurdity, characters, and tastes---creating our own rituals that can give us opportunities to open up. We try to keep it real, use resources that are right around us, and try to do it all with heart. A good practice for us, a good time for diners.

*"I am interested in a theater where everything is experienced for the first time, and I have stripped away the ties with conventional dance form.....I have come back to the ritualistic beginnings of art as a sharpened expression of life, extending every kind of perception. I want to participate in the events of extreme authenticity, to involve people with their environment so that life is lived as a whole."*  
~Ann Halprin

## What is ritual?

- A way to put us in direct experience of mythic reality, to act it out, giving people a sense of participation---we can safely go through something symbolically that can help us to go through something that is larger or deeper.
  - If you need to explore a heavy topic, it can provide a safe space with which to walk into less-safe territories
- Tells a story, creates a community story---
  - The word “community” comes from the root Latin *cum* and *munis*, or “giving together”
- Time to remember, to be grateful, to be aware
- Takes us to an altered moment, helps us be aware of details, like a traveler

*“The pilgrim leaves his or her everyday surroundings to become more appreciative of his or her everyday surroundings”*



## We can create new stories

Stories can be the ‘soul-level truth’ of a culture. Stories can help us to recollect ourselves; to understand changes; to feel connected to each other, to our natural world, and to our past and future. They can give us an ‘opening to transcendence’. These days it is difficult to know what our stories are. Countless stories and traditions have been lost or destroyed...but new forms of the mythos can spring from this decay. Taking with us the parts that serve us, we can create our new stories from the ground up.

*“From all of our grave losses and all our fortunate releases, a space has been cleared for innovation and creativity.....The stories of despair we feel are not maps to a territory that lead off the edge of the world into hopelessness---instead they can be life giving, leading **beyond** boundaries of an old story, to a commitment to a new future.” (Cultural Creatives)*

The greatest danger is the deadening of the mind and heart. It doesn’t work to just say, “Get over it and get on with our lives”...so why don’t we cut through the psychic numbing, going toward Wisdom of the Heart? We who wish to facilitate a change-of-heart culture need to transform our own hearts.



## Try This At Home

*“...do not wait for maturity or insight or wisdom. Do not wait until you are sure you know what you are doing. Do not wait until you have enough technique....and at the same time, be patient.”*

*~Anne Bogart*

## The Process

*“Do not fear mistakes. There are none.”*

*~Miles Davis*

None of us really know what we’re doing, but we do it anyway. Initially there is some spark of an idea, and I test the waters to see if people are up for an event. Then we gather a general idea of a date that it could happen---availability of food might be key, as well as availability of a space. Everything is an influence: the time of year, the food available, the space available, and what we are going through in our lives.

Then we have our first meetings, and usually only a handful of people show up for these. Though on the surface this lack of numbers might seem discouraging, it is much easier to focus with small groups.

At the first meeting we go around the group and talk about what is alive in each of us at the moment, finding beginnings of ideas. We let it go where it does, and take notes. Don’t try too hard to see the shape---simply try to see the seed---the common element, the Thread, the Essence of the brainstorming. It may take a while to see it.

Sometimes we visit a space and that helps create the show, by listening to the environment it helps define the Essence.



The Essence is crucial---it will be the thread that keeps this whole crazy mess together. The Intention. The Seed. You may not be a directorial-type with a clear vision of how everything should *look*, but if you have this core element, this Intention, it will keep the process on track. Even if it is only on a sub-conscious level---it will keep things internally cohesive when outer elements at first glance might not appear to make sense.

*“What are you abstracting from?”* It is a crucial question.



Then we divvy up the tasks---figure out the parts that we are each responsible for, and work on things at home. It can be difficult to find a time that we can meet, so it has been more feasible to do projects in one’s own time. Having a seed-vision that is clear helps us stay on the same page even when we are not physically together.

And Last but not Least: Utilize what is around you---there are many hidden talents in our communities--this can give them a space to flourish.

## Elements of a Show

- **Create the Setting**
  - Help people feel like they have stepped into another world, somewhere else---change or accentuate the environment.
- **Help diners to Make the LEAP**
  - With the setting and some visual/ character/puppet/unusual-element very early on, draw them in, help them to let go....leaving their thoughts behind, and believing. Using lighting, puppets, dry ice....whatever it takes!
  - Lead them into the event, the story
    - It may help to have an MC
- **Types of Shows: The Story OR Separate Mini Pieces**
  - **A) The STORY**
    - Intro
    - Conflict
      - Tension can be a crucial part of a journey
    - Get Through It
      - Part of the purpose of ritual is getting us through something on a small level so we can work through it on a larger level
      - The release of the tension is tied to the feeling of pleasure
      - *Walk through the valley of the shadow of death---*”through” is the most important word.
    - Conclusion
  - **B) SEPARATE MINIS**
    - Like a cabaret show, people put their small acts together to form a whole
    - Some kind of Finale at the end
    - It helps to have an interesting MC
- **Music**
  - Musicians can play during the food courses
  - They also can do sound effects and music for the show
- **The Gift**
  - We sometimes give a gift at the end, made by someone in the area.



## Roles



These are a way to break down the tasks, don't be intimidated by titles. Most of us are not theater people. For us it has worked well when when a few people meet regularly, and these people help find others to do parts of the show.

One person often embodies more than one role, though I would not recommend doing too many of them at the same time. Or many people might do something like Costumes. You want someone to make sure each thing happens---it depends who you have in your community, and who is feeling moved to to take something on.

- **Facilitator**---leads the meetings, allows flow, *not too attached to ideas, but keeps the Intent and Essence*. The Vision Keeper.
  - Work for these shows are mostly done at home on people's own time, separate from the group. The facilitator helps to keep their projects tied together.
- **Producer**---gets details together--lines up the space, organizes the brochures, lines up borrowing various things, organizes the registration for the night, maybe keeps track of funds.
- **Director**---especially the last week you need someone to keep it all together, leading the walk-through and dress rehearsal---they usually end up being a Stage Manager of sorts for the shows.
- **Food Person**---plans the food to coincide with the theme, plans the logistics of the meal, lines up helpers, cooks while practicing being present.
- **Music and Sounds**---helps with sound effects and music during the show---maybe this person (or people) is not a musician, but they can organize the people playing the music/sound.
- **Puppets/Physical Characters**---it helps to have a person that loves this kind of thing and can help others. Or maybe numerous people are doing this.
- **Set construction**---find someone who likes to build things. Use cardboard, scrap lumber, sheets...whatever is around.
- **Costumes**---you may or may not need a specific person to do this.



## The Food

This is the heart and soul of the show. To me this is why we do it--the food, and having fun. We create a setting to allow people to open up...then we take advantage of this perfect time to set before them a plateful of love.

We focus on food that we can find from our area, or at least our region. There are so many political and economic reasons you could list why we might do this, but beyond that there is something inexplicable and mysterious about ingesting foods from nearby us---we *become* local. We ingest the minerals from our surroundings and adopt them in our cells, it is an alchemical transformation.



The state of mind while cooking, it is the real magical ingredient. Breathing, being present, not rushing while cooking: this is the *most important part of the show*. Cooking with Soul...it isn't just a catchy phrase.

*"May the food we are eating make us aware of the interconnections between the universe and us, the earth and us, and all other living species and us."*

*~Thich Nhat Hanh*

## Family Meal

Whatever you do, have a meal after the show for all the participants. This is the best time of all. It can be simple food, but something that you all eat together after the show is over. Enjoying food together helps us to practice what we preach.

*"Sitting down to a meal, the aging process stops"*

*~an Italian expression*



## Puppets, Masks and Paper Mache

An old and accessible art that can bring life to a story, create characters and settings, bring in an element of other-worldliness, help people forget where they are, and to forget themselves for a couple of hours. Newspaper, wheat paste, clay for the forms, and paint---it doesn't take much.

*"Puppetry is conceptual sculpture, cheap, true to its popular origins, uninvited by the powers-that-be, its feet in the mud, economically, on the fringe of existence, technically a collage combining paper, rags and scraps of wood into kinetic two-and-three dimensional bodies"*

*~Peter Schumann*

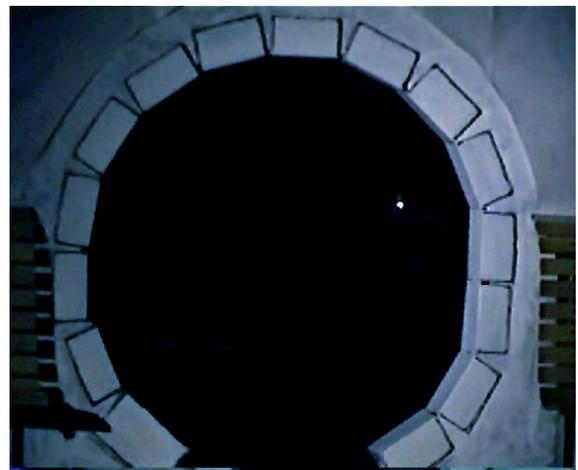


## The Space

The setting. The ambiance. Creating a place that helps your diners feel like they have left their old selves behind. A way for them to feel like they are travelers...and people tend to be more present and notice more details when they travel.

Examples:

- Draping sheets or bolts of cloth on walls or from ceiling
- Painting sheets, use as backdrop
- Lighting---candles, holiday lights, rope light,
- Sculptures and Human Sculptures
- Fountains
- Incense
- Walls, doorways, archways built of cardboard/paper mache
- Curtains they have to walk through
- Canopies
- Shadows and shadow screens
- Outdoors





## Cardboard

These are four Talking Heads from one of the shows---don't underestimate the amazing potential of this abundant resource...cardboard!



*"Each child should be taught a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing anecdote against the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength." ~Rachel Carson*

## The Gift

We sometimes have given a gift to the diners, something that related to the show and made by a local artist. At the Chinese New Year/Water Horse we gave them a tea bowl made by a local potter; at Faeries they picked from a tree their hand-carved spoon made by a local artisan; at Shadow and Light they took home a hand-made beeswax candle; at trans-MU-tation they were served their dessert of Mango Lassi with a hand-made glass straw.

It's a fun way to get some local art out there, to incorporate an object into the evening, and for diners to be able to take home a little memory. We try to be careful of not just providing more "stuff", so ideally it is something utilitarian, or consumable, like the candle.

## Theater and the Stomach

*"We sometimes give you a piece of bread along with the puppet show because our bread and theater belong together. For a long time the theater arts have been separated from the stomach.*

*Theater was entertainment. Entertainment was meant for the skin. Bread was meant for the stomach. The old rites of baking, eating, and offering bread were forgotten. The bread decayed and became mush. We would like you to take your shoes off when you come to our puppet show or we would like to bless you with the fiddle bow. The bread shall remind you of the sacrament of eating.*



*We want you to understand that theater is not yet an established form, not the place of commerce you think it is, where you pay to get something. Theater is different. It is more like bread, more like a necessity. Theater is a form of religion. It is fun. It preaches sermons and it builds up a self sufficient ritual where the actors try to raise their lives to the purity and ecstasy of the actions in which they participate.*

*Puppet theater is the theater of all means. Puppets and masks should be played in the street. They are louder than the traffic. They don't teach problems, but they scream and dance and hit each other on the head and display life in its clearest terms.*

*Puppet theater is an extension of sculpture. A professional sculptor doesn't have much to do but decorate libraries or schools. But to take sculpture into the streets, to tell a story with it, to make music and dances for it---that's what interests me.*

*Puppet theater is of action rather than dialogue. The action is reduced to the simplest dance-like and specialized gestures. Our ten-foot rod puppets were invented as dancers, each puppet with a different construction for its movement. A puppet may be a hand only, or it may be a complicated body of many heads, hands, rods and fabrics. Our puppeteers double as musicians, actors and technicians."*

*~Peter Schumann  
Founder of Bread and Puppet Theater in Vermont*