Central to the work of collaborative partnership Cooking Sections are the causes and effects of climate change, particularly in relation to global food production. As work from its latest project goes on show at Tate Britain, Ellen Mara De Wachter explores a particularly fishy tale.
Alon Schwabe and Daniel Fernández Pascual met in 2013, while studying at the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths College, London, an experimental academic department that also produced 2018 Turner Prize nominees Forensic Architecture. They first collaborated on a project with three other colleagues, investigating the politics of relocation in communities affected by climate change, and have worked as a duo ever since, with Schwabe bringing his background in performance to the partnership, and Fernández Pascual his training in architecture. They chose the name Cooking Sections because of its range of associations, the most evocative of which may be the schematic cross-sections of buildings and landscapes, which show what things are made of and how they work. Accordingly, Cooking Sections sees food as the gateway for its exploration of the workings of climate change, focusing on issues such as the transformation of food production from a seasonal to a year-round activity, the evolution of landscapes to support new farming techniques, and the environmental impact of accelerated production across a range of industries. The central axis of the duo’s practice so far has been Climavore, an ambitious ongoing project with strands in multiple sites, from the Pacific Coast to the Persian Gulf. Its latest iteration is an exhibition at Tate Britain, titled ‘Salmon: A Red Herring’, which explores the environmental and cultural impact of the intensive aquaculture of the UK’s most valuable food export, farmed salmon, and imagines more sustainable alternatives.

Cooking Sections defines a ‘climavore’ as someone who explores how to eat as climate changes. To do justice to such a complex topic, Schwabe and Fernández Pascual cast their research nets wide, and delve deep into the hidden relationships between global systems, from farming to finance, deserts to waterways. Their work is not limited to informing audiences; they also like to imagine and set in motion what they call ‘alternative metabolic systems’: new ways of facilitating the transfer of energy from the weather and soil into food in such a way as to regenerate traumatised ecologies. These aims are embodied in their ongoing project, the Climavore Station on the Isle of Skye, in Scotland, which they initiated in 2017 to respond to human-induced environmental damage on the island. This presents itself in the ill effects of intensive salmon farming in the waters off Skye, a food industry that produces countless deformed and sick animals infested with sea lice, and pollutes the water with vast quantities of toxic fish manure that kills off other marine life.

Over the past three years Cooking Sections has collaborated with local businesses and residents on Skye to initiate the transition from damaging
aquaculture to regenerative practices. They have begun raising oysters and eelweed, which are important ingredients in Climavore recipes. An apprenticeship programme trains local students from Portree High School to become Climavore cooks, and provides work experience at restaurants around Skye, whose chefs have replaced farmed salmon with Climavore dishes. For the past few months, in the run-up to its exhibition at Tate Britain, Cooking Sections has worked with Tate, which cares across the four Tate sites, and whose chefs recently led a workshop instructing Climavore apprentices in the preparation of hand-dolved scallops and seaweed isoto. The oysters Cooking Sections has brought to Forteres beach are raised in steel cages that emerge at low tide to double as a boltiguing saltwater community hub for free public talks, performances and tastings. Its long-term ambitions is to make the Isle of Skye famous for its kelp, dulse, oysters and mussels – ingredients that ‘regenerate’ the land by breathing.

Connected to these objectives is Cooking Sections’ aim to expose the reality of Scottish aquaculture to regenerative practices. They have replaced farmed salmon with Climavore dishes. Their Climavore project explores how to eat as climate changes.

**Cooking Sections**

_Cooking Sections_ explores how to eat as climate changes. Cooking Sections’_ Tidal Crisps_ recipe: Bake 50g rolled oats in water for six to 12 hours, peel the oven to 160°C. Add 1,200ml water, 50g Dijon mustard, 2 tsp apple cider vinegar and 180g wheel fennel to the soaked oats and mix well. Line baking trays with silicone mats and spread the batter evenly and thin. With scissors, cut 1 pack of nettle leaves into coffin-sized flakes and spread 50g of dried seaweed over the batter. Bake in the ovens for 10 minutes until the bread is dry, golden and golden.

While cooking, you can start plotting your eelweed seaweed farm. With so little as enough rope of rope and buoys, you can set up a plot that would yield dozens of kilos of kelp a year.

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