

FLAUNT



*THE POST-MEDIUM ISSUE:
WARS OF PERCEPTION*

96.95 U.S. \$22.95 CAN/UK
01 >
09281 01071 5

Because really, there can only be so many cooks in the kitchen. As Achatz regarding a recent award acceptance at the culinary conference *Lo Mejor*, "The event was previously held in San Sebastian for the past ten years. The number of high-profile chefs in that region have helped to draw people to the congress. It turns out the organizer had a falling out with the chefs of the San Sebastian region—Andoni Aduriz, [Juan Mari] Arzak, [Pedro] Subijana—and they publicly said they would not be at the congress in the future, so the chefs from Northern Spain did not participate."

Yet unlike the media-laden squabbles of other artistic masters of craft—such as the actions of Seattle Symphony Orchestra conductor Gerard Schwarz's "vandalism" at players, including a dented French horn and a razor blade planted in the instrument, as quoted by *The New York Times*, or Robert Hughes' denunciation of Damien Hirst's *show must go on*. And not for other artists. These orchestrateurs are behind the scenes of sparkling kitchens, not under public scrutiny, and as Aduriz says of his time working under Adria at *El Bulli*, "I learned to respect the guests there, to believe in their dreams, to be risky and anti-conformist." At stake is the glowing dining room, the patience, precision, and emotional restraint can all but guarantee its enjoyment.

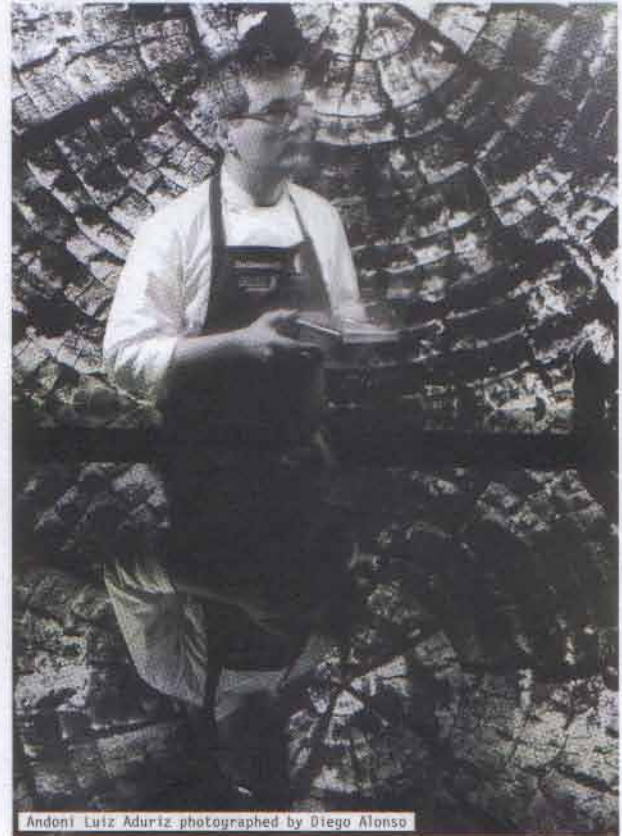


Enrique Olvera photographed by Toni Francois

Achatz further speaks to cultural differences and the expectations of the Midwest. "Chicago's unique from New York, from San Francisco, from anywhere, but it always has been with art, with architecture. And there's something about the Midwest that is in complete conflict to what people generalize: conservative, meat and potatoes... Midwesterners aren't caught up in what people are doing on the far west coast, they preclude them from enjoying this kind of food. *Alinea* couldn't exist in San Francisco. They think Alice Waters: farm at the table, pulling a carrot out of the ground, rinsing it off, put it on the plate, simplest and purest. They're not into molecular gastronomy. In New York, they're so wound up and everybody is too important and they won't accept the fact that you have to carve out two or three hours and sit in the restaurant for the experience."



his tongue, Achatz elected for progressive treatments with doctors at the University of Chicago. He underwent three months of chemotherapy, successfully defeating the cancer. "The whole thing's been surreal," he says, then pauses. "I mean, I go from



Andoni Luiz Aduriz photographed by Diego Alonso

culinary school to the best restaurant in the country [Thomas Keller's *The French Laundry*], where I'm second in charge in very little time, and then head of my own restaurant at *26*, and after that *Alinea* and we skyrocket and *Gourmet* is calling us the best restaurant in the country, and six months later a doctor is telling me I'm going to die—a hell of a roller coaster."

He continues, enlightening artistry's cosmic unpredictability. "I've always been on a mission. My life is very calculated; I'm a control freak. You have a vision and you think, 'This is how it's going to be.' And something like this—you realize you don't have any control over anything, at any moment."

Like these chefs' flaming cinnamon, molecularly reconstructed vanilla beans, or duck fat spherification, art melds with science, and here, for Achatz, it's one artist at the whims of another. Excusing a tangent in advance, Achatz says, "You know, front page of *The New York Times* today is the Anderson Clinic in Texas, and it's pretty popularly known as one of the best in the world. And it makes me kind of angry knowing that had I gone there, my outcome would be extremely different. I worked with some doctors who think about medicine the same way we do with food—outside the box, different methods. It's all down to the way people approach their craft."

The manifold euphoria, conversation, and sensory pleasure available with modern cuisine owes itself to many factors: the media in the kitchen, advancements in lab science, the complexities of heightened global trade and communication. BUT IT'S TODAY'S CONTEMPORARY PRACTITIONERS OF HAUTE CUISINE

THAT SPRINKLE THEIR SHAMANISTIC DUST OVER CREATIONS WHICH MIGHT OTHERWISE ONLY MOVE US TOWARD SUSTENANCE. THEY OPERATE FROM WITHIN A UNIVERSAL MEDIUM, PAIRING AND REFINING AND MANIPULATING, AND ADVANCE CUISINE TO AN UNEQUIVOCAL ART FORM.