

THE FRIDGE

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The fridge

The fridge is an ecosystem of passive survivance. It is a place before being an object, and not just any place since it is one of the few places capable of slowing down the effects of time. Stored in the veins of its body, there are dormant forms that resist ruin. Sleeping forms that are just waiting to wake up, but can sleep there much longer than if we had left them to rot outside. The fridge is a land of constancy. It relieves us of the anxieties of preservation by providing a safe, hermetic space for the sterilization of our foodstuffs. It keeps the forms we hide in it in a state of quasi-lethargic latency. This state of delay and lessening of the consequences of time preserves them from a future ineptitude. The fridge delays the erosion of forms by numbing them, allowing us to have them for a longer time. It acts as a silent reservoir, only its diffuse humming

letting us know of its functional perseverance. It collects without flinching the materials of the supply, associating in its body all the perishable forms that we like to swallow. The association is fortuitous, conditioned by its capacity to contain. The collection is ephemeral and constantly renewed, but the fridge is static. It does not distinguish between forms and behaves with them in a perfectly equivocal manner. It is up to us to distribute them correctly in its body according to their attributes and their vocation.

The fridge is a vertical space with an autonomous and singular hierarchy that needs to be tamed. Most often, it is divided into two distinct compartments and their main distinctions lie in their size and atmospheric characteristics.

One is large, usually taking up three quarters of the fridge space in its lower part. It stays at around 4°C and is the cooling part of the fridge. If the temperature exceeds 10°C, it becomes almost useless and the food that takes up residence there is exposed to bacteria and decay. Milk goes sour, meat festers and turns grey; in short, there is nothing left to preserve. This refrigerated area is itself hierarchically divided into different instances of preservation. It has between two and four shelves, adjustable according to the size of the fridge. On top, you can put loose items without too many problems, but you should consider that it is wiser to place the more capricious items, such as meat and fish, towards the bottom of the shelves, to better optimise the refrigeration capacity of the fridge. At the bottom of this cooled space is what is commonly known as the vegetable tray, which, as the name suggests, serves as a neighborhood for the plant community in our fridges. In the door, we put liquid products, small jars of mustard and jam and all

the other little things that don't seem to belong anywhere else.

The second compartment has a very different value from the first one. While one is open on a daily basis, the second is more of a punctual matter. It is examined from time to time when you have a specific idea in mind. It is much colder there, the temperature is around -20°C. This means that the food has gone from being sleepy to being completely hibernated. They can sleep there for several months, even several years, pass their expiry date and become covered with a thick layer of frozen water without altering their edibility. The only condition is that the cold chain must never be broken. We are in the freezing zone, an icy cold zone that encompasses everything that comes within its reach. Things go into a state of deep freeze. They condense and tighten in their flesh, the water they contain has completely solidified, making them as hard as rock. Slowly, the forms are attacked by the ice that crystallizes on their surface and settles like a fragile film that becomes denser with time. It spreads like a microbe and penetrates the flesh of the food without resistance. The water coagulates and swells, removing the air around it. Last degree of petrification, the freezer isolates the forms from the rest of the world. Cryogenics is complete, and the reversion of the process takes a considerable amount of time.

The air smokes when the door is opened, so much so that the difference in temperature creates a thermal shock between the atmosphere outside and the one inside. It is heavy and thick, filled with a sticky density. The oxygen has disappeared, preventing any attempt to breathe. The freezer is a suspended space, a cold room where bodies lie without a past. The ceiling is hollowed out with compact, raspy blocks of ice. The walls are covered with a mass of impenetrable frost that grows denser day by day. The frost

is slowly eating away the door's seal, which is increasingly difficult to open.

On the floor there is a petrified puddle that looks like an ice rink scratched by wet cardboard boxes that have scraped its surface. The puddle clings to the pavement like the mould that creeps into the clammy corners of homes. It nonchalantly spreads from the floor to the walls, making the junction between the two disappear. Patiently, it makes itself at home and infiltrates the floor. It slides along the frozen surface, taking its time and wanting to stretch out again to reach the refrigerator. As it reaches its goal, the 24°C temperature difference hits it hard. It loses its solid consistency and liquefies in the rush. The puddle settles upside down, managing to keep itself suspended from the ceiling by the cold that intrudes on both sides of the wall. Thus held back in its fall, it strives to spread itself in the only way it can, oozing its own body in a drip to reach the first shelf. The water is in no hurry, it takes its pain in patience and accepts its decay with ease. It observes itself growing up in the mirror it continues to manufacture incessantly. Its reflection fascinates it, at the same time cloudy and clear, it splits in two in the stack of the glass shelves. The puddle gradually reaches its ultimate goal: to contaminate the entire fridge. It has dropped limply onto the first shelf, forming a thick trickle of water that spreads carefully to the rim. Having reached the maximum capacity of unstable fluid that the shelf can hold, the liquid flows out of all its edges, trickling down to the next one until the burnout of all stable surfaces.

Several floors above, the alienated freezer continues to produce a penetrating cold. The moisture does not evaporate and the layer of frost swells again without realising that it is sinking deeper and deeper into the porous



In the basement of Françoise Bergonzi, Champigny-sur-Marne, France. 2015

ground. The frost is blind. He can only see again when he comes out of this paralysing state of torpor. Just below him, the puddle is clear-sighted and does not miss a moment of the flooded spectacle that it imposes on the great white frozen mass. Its last seal has already given way and the fridge is now gently drowning, without really realising that it has started to leak onto the tiles. It continues to hum as if nothing had happened, also asleep by the coolness of his body. The puddle grows in size and seeps into the grooves of the helpless tiles. They watch it leak all over the kitchen. Smooth and slippery, the entire floor becomes a soaked pool where all the furniture splashes around without understanding what is happening to them. Nothing stops the quiet progress of this dull and icy water, full of colourless reflections. It easily escapes the vigilance of the door that was blocking its path to swallow the rest of the house. Soon, all the hollows of the dwelling will drown in this discreet lake that the fridge was unable to contain.

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