

# **Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria**



„Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today“  
Wolfgang Welsch

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria



## The table and the mutual meal in art recipes from the transcultural cuisine

An art project grounded on the occasion of the Austria-Japan-Year 2009. In an interdisciplinary approach the focus is directed on Eat-Art and Design. The table, especially the dining table or the guest table, serves herewith as metaphor, social allegory and central creative element. The underlying concept in the encounters between Austria and Japan is here the one of transculturality based on the article of the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch „*Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today*“. Whereas the traditional concept of single cultures, envisages cultures as closed spheres or autonomous islands, which in best case can exist next to each other in a separatist way, the concept of transculturality emphasizes interconnectedness, cultural entanglement, the heterogeneous and hybrid identity. While also the concepts of interculturality and multiculturalism derive from the homogenizing exclusive idea of cultures, transculturality is based on inclusiveness, albeit differing from global uniformization.

**Transculturality – recognizing the foreign components, of differing cultural origin, in us**

Eat-Art as artistic expression enables the sensual perception of complex transcultural processes. The table and the mutual meal offer as stylistic device a plenitude of creative opportunities to express forms of unity. The table is the place for communication, sharing of food, time and emotions. Transcultural Eat-Art

foresees a serial of events in Vienna and Tokyo, from May to November 2009, created by artists, designers, cultural actors and architects who live in Austria and Japan. All events will in different ways tackle the social and communicative aspects of sharing a table for a meal, the interplay of identities and metamorphosis. The project participants from Austria and Japan will by means of exchange and interaction explore similarities, differences and overlappings.

**Food: artistic media  
Table: image-carrier, design object and basic symbol for communication, sharing of meals, time and emotions**

The project is structured in three components which are compiled as recipe-collections 1 – 3 in an ebook, the “Cookbook Transcultural”:

1) **Tablelandscape transcultural** is the mutual creation of a three-dimensional panel created by dishes. These dishes are based on 12 creative recipes from project participants from Austria and Japan. In each case a short personal story on Vienna or Tokyo will be translated into a recipe, a story of Vienna to be converted in a recipe with Japanese ingredients, and respectively a story of Tokyo using Austrian ingredients. There will be a trial cooking for each recipe in form of a cooking performance. In a first step the photo documentation of all results serves as base for the composition of a virtual table landscape. A full-scale print on canvas of

this virtual table landscape is planned as an exhibit.

2) **The Fire-Table** is a changeable table that combines formal elements of Austria and Japan. The table consists of different layers that contain food and is equipped with an accumulation of cooking devices and the capability of generating different cooking grades. As such the dishes will be prepared on the table itself. This complex multifunctional design-table invites in an impressive way to experience the metamorphoses of food.

3) **Table fellowships** consist of artistic photo serials from Vienna and Tokyo capturing the private frame of mutual meals, the family and friends table, as well as convivial circles of dinner guests in typical pubs.

The three components can be assembled to one common presentation. As such the table landscape is conceived following the measures of the Fire-table (6 x 1,20 m).

**Recipe 1 : Table landscape transcultural  
Recipe 2: Fire Table  
Recipe 3:  
Table fellowships  
Transcultural Eat Art as a cookbook and ebook**

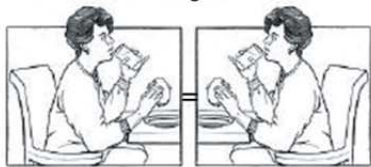
# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria concept

„Transculturality - the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today“  
Wolfgang Welsch

[Austria] + [Japan] + [ ] + [ ] = Transculturality → (recognizing the “foreign” components, of differing cultural origin, in us)

networking, exchange of different lifestyles,  
values and ideologies

T A B L E (communication, sharing of food, time and emotions)



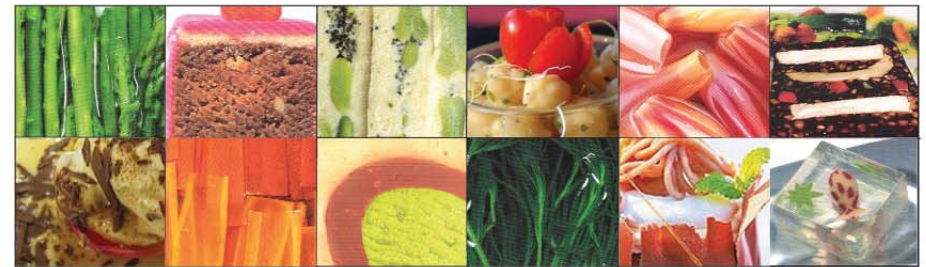
= “image-carrier”  
design object  
basic symbol.

↑  
F O O D



six levels of consciousness  
(sight, sound, smell, taste,  
touch and mind)

= the artistic media



Recipe 1: Table landscape transcultural

Recipe 2: The Fire-Table

Recipe 3: Table fellowships  
and

Transcultural Eat-Art as a cookbook and ebook



**Interculturality** is seen as an attempt for communication and promotion of understanding between single, but closed cultures.

**Multiculturalism** dedicates itself to the conflicts of different cultures living together within one society, seeks ways of mutual tolerance, but in daily experience leads often to ghettoization or cultural fundamentalism.

**Transculturality** refers to the complexity of modern cultures and on today’s networking and exchange of different lifestyles, values and ideologies. Cultural identity of this type is not to be equated with national identity, it is rather about recognizing the “foreign” components, of differing cultural origin, in us. These transcultural components in one’s identity act as points of affiliation in the transgression of separating barriers and lead to a new cultural diversity. As such it is not about the juxtaposition of clearly differentiated cultures, but about showing overlaps and distinctions at the same time. It promotes not separation, but exchange and interaction.

Eat-Art as artistic expression enables the sensual perception of complex transcultural processes.

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria



## Project Description

### Inter-, Multi-, Transculturality

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### Eat-Art as artistic media, the table as stylistic device

Eat-Art as artistic expression enables the sensual perception of complex transcultural processes. Modernity is strongly defined by the separation of

nature and culture. In the fast-moving 21st Century, industrialized food often leads to human self-alienation. *Transcultural Eat-Art* is to be understood as a unified work connecting life and art and seeking to address all the senses. Contrary to Adorno's theory of the (merely) culinary as not being "art", hollowing out of sensory faculties, the Art Dinner aims to sharpen the sensation for a differentiated sensory perception. Addressing the six levels of consciousness – sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and mind – it leads to a state of self-awareness.

*Transcultural Eat-Art* attempts to visualize and to translate the concept of transculturality in an artistic culinary way. As such the interaction of the project participants from Austria and Japan is characterized by the reflection of common as well as of independent points of reference in their cultural identity and the formation of new landscapes.

Food is the artistic media. The table is "image-carrier", functional design object and basic symbol. As a symbol it stands for community, togetherness, familiarity and intimacy. The table is the place for communication, sharing of food, time and emotions.

### The dining table and the table fellowship Social and cultural relevance

The central social role of common meals is already found 380 B.C. within the symposia of Platon, which with their opulent guest meals formed the framework for philosophical debate. The mutual meal and the table fellowship are of significant importance for the living together of people, in any culture. Eating as cultural phenomenon always generates its own form of communication. As such the family assembles at the set table to eat, to communicate and as a token of togetherness.

The table serves as a place for communication, for the celebration of festive rituals and it structures everyday and feast day. The way of setting the table and of preparing food mirrors cultural identity. Whether on family or on social occasions, the fact of sitting together at a table demonstrates a sense of unity. Familiarity or intimacy are either the precondition or can be generated by the common meal. From the festive table for representative purposes to the table for two there is a wide span of most different table fellowships. As such the table and the mutual meal offer as stylistic device a plenitude of creative opportunities to express forms of unity which this project will explore in the field of transculturality.

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

## The specific projects

If you consider *Transcultural Eat-Art* as a cookbook, the following projects are its recipes and you may find some of the same ingredients in different recipes. The recipes can be served on their own, likewise they may also be combined well. The kitchen is of course transcultural.

Artists, designers, cultural actors and architects create the recipes with which they bear personal reference to Vienna and/or Tokyo. They may, but not necessarily, be born in Austria or Japan. They may, but equally not necessarily, live in Vienna or Tokyo. Of relevance is the part of the individual cultural identity which has been in some way influenced by one of these cities.

The ingredients used in the recipes originate from Japan or Austria. All recipes will by stages be tested in trial cooking events.

Each recipe is then collected in the cookbook. At the end the book (to be distributed as an e-book and available as download) is complete and a festive meal of many dishes can be created with all recipes.

### Recipe 1: Table landscape intercultural

This recipe comes from Katalin Mesterhazy and has been readapted for *Transcultural Eat-Art*. It is about a



whole collection of recipes, which when realized all together, result in a whole table landscape. Each recipe is based on a small personal story on Vienna or Tokyo, which is transformed in food, dishes, eat-sculptures according to taste. As such a story of Vienna will for example be sent to Tokyo and will there be translated into a recipe by a second person using ingredients from Japan. Reciprocally stories from Tokyo will be converted to recipes with Austrian ingredients.

Ingredients can be chosen in such a way as to relate in colour, taste, haptics or other creative parameters to the essence, emotionality and message of the respective story.

Each recipe is granted a specific space on the tabletop in the phase of realization. Together they fill the whole table – an eatable panel of Austrian and Japanese ingredients is generated, from stories about Vienna and Tokyo, interwoven into a transcultural landscape.

Each recipe will be tested in a trial cooking constituting a serial of events from May to June 2009 in Vienna and in Tokyo. All results will be documented by photography, allowing in the first instance the composition of a digital virtual panel combining all recipes.

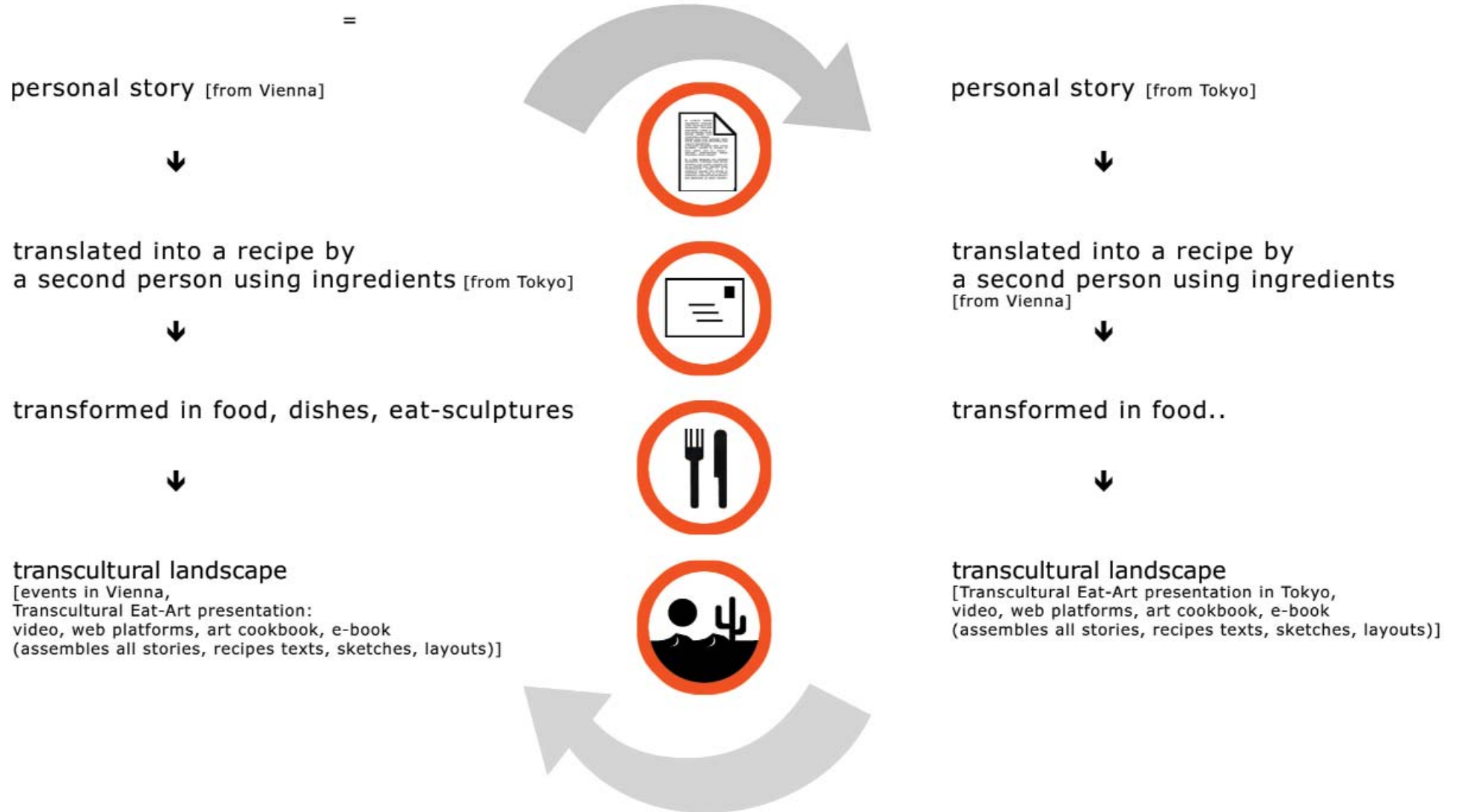
This table landscape resulting from the photo documentary is then printed on a full-scale canvas (6 x 1,20 m) and mounted on wooden stretcher, and is therewith reshaped into a two-dimensional panel.

Additionally it is planned to produce a documentary of short videos to be presented on web platforms.

The art *cookbook transcultural* in form of an e-book assembles all stories, recipes (texts, sketches, layouts) and the documentary of the realizations.

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

Table landscape transcultural *recipe 1*



# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

## The specific projects

### Recipe 2 : The Fire-Table

By Sonja Stummerer and Martin Hablesreiter (honey & bunny) to be developed in cooperation with Architect Ko Oono (longstanding collaborator of Arata Isozaki, architect and designer in Tokyo) and Japanese designers.

Within their concept „ChangingFoods – culinary metamorphoses“ the architects Sonja Stummerer and Martin Hablesreiter developed the idea of a ‚fire-table‘. “In ‘ChangingFoods– culinary metamorphoses’ Honey & bunny will work with the psychological, historical, philosophical and culinary meaning of the stove on the one hand and the transformation on the other hand. For this purpose a stove will be developed, which offers place for guests – a sort of fire-table. The table offers space to eat and to experience transformation on the stove.

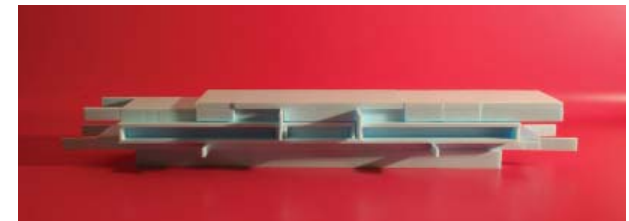
The aim of „ChangingFoods – culinary metamorphoses“ is to work out human basic needs with culinary means. To eat is an extremely intimate activity. In this sense honey & bunny propose to question the psychological approach of food intake. We question and explore cardinal motives for the transformation of our nutrition. Why do we love the metamorphosis of appearance? Why do we love the metamorphosis of taste? We question and explore the nature of culinary magic

and the culinary mythology and we want to create a ritual activity from the results of these questions. Honey & bunny will develop a ‚fire-table‘ including a technical feasibility study.”

It is planned to stage the Eat-Art Performance „Changing Food“ in form of a transcultural dialogue in Vienna and in Tokyo. A table in form of a changeable piece of furniture will respectively be placed in a garden or in public space and it will contain food in different cooking grades. The event is to enable visitors on one evening to experience similarities, differences as well as metamorphoses and to discuss it accordingly.

For this event honey & bunny will design together with colleagues from Japan a table (the Fire-Table) bearing formal elements from both cultures. This piece of furniture contains an accumulation of cooking devices, as for example heated iron, pot-shaped pits and simple fire. These tools carry different degrees of heat which allow insight into chemical and cultural cooking processes. As such the anthropological question of raw and cooked food is posed in a transcultural manner.

During this event the individual cooking devices will be removed in ritual activities which remind of Japanese and Austrian traditional festivities in order to demonstrate different ways to handle fire and which bring to appearance new layers of food and dishes.



*First model of the Fire-Table, a changeable multifunctional design-table with several layers, which can be removed one by one.*

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

## The specific projects

### Recipe 3: Table fellowships

By Szymon Olszowski in cooperation  
with a Japanese photographer

A photo serial directing an intimate view on table communities exploring their social and cultural relevance. The documentation captures the private frame of mutual meals, the family and friends table, as well as convivial circles of dinner guests in typical Viennese pubs.

This serial will be juxtaposed to a respective serial from Tokyo in order to analyze similarities and differences.

*Sample photos by Szymon Olszowski, Martin Hablesreiter,  
Mascha Fekete and more*



*"Each meal tells us who are the cooks, in which time and culture they live, in which region the live. They translate their existence with each meal and identify with the meal".  
Peter Kubelka*

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

## Historical Background

### The guest table – cultural tradition in Europe and Japan

The guest table, 'La table d'hôtes' means that all guests eat the same menu at the same table. Until the end of the 19th Century it was usual in France for hotel guests to sit together on a long table for a common meal. There was only one single menu for all attendees. Travellers from all over the world met in this way and exchanged information. The notion of 'table d'hôtes' found a way into the English language at the beginning of the 17th Century. This is evidence that the culture of the guest table had spread within Europe. Today the Tables d'hôtes are often offered together with guest rooms; thereby the guest has the privilege of dining together with his hosts and other visitors. You can now also find restaurants or pubs in Vienna that are furnished with one or more long tables –also known as 'unity table'. It serves most of all the purpose of communication, it can be used at any time and in any number of guests, given the availability of free seats, with the choice of individual consumption.

The Japanese version of the 'table d'hôtes' is known as Teishoku (定食). However, the main focus is here directed to the offer of a fixed menu at a favourable rate. From a cultural viewpoint it is considered in Japan that the mutual meal from one bowl leads to a closer friendship. Cooking on the table in turn has a long

tradition in Japan and is called Teppanyaki (Teppan indicates an iron pan, and Yaki indicates grilling), translated it means : "cook on a hot board". This way of food preparation is very healthy as the cooking is effected with very little fat. A Teppanyaki cooking tabletop measures up to 3 meters in length.



### Eat-Art – a short overview on Cooking as Art

In the twenties and thirties the culinary practice became object and content of contemporary art through the futurists, an Italian artist group centred around Marinetti and Fillià. The staging of cooking as art by the futurists led to the installation of an 'Artist Kitchen' in form of a restaurant, which also functioned as exhibition space and location of culinary happenings. As such the experimental kitchen named 'Santopalato' (taverna of the holy palatine) was opened 1931 in Turin. Daniel Spoerri continued this tradition in the sixties and opened the 'restaurant Spoerri' in 1968 in Düsseldorf. Peter Kubelka, born 1934 in Vienna, finally referred to the preparation of a meal as fine art, even



pic. Daniel Spoerri

as the oldest form of art. Kubelka defines cooking as a communicative media. In 1980 he established at the academy of fine arts in Frankfurt the Analysis of Cooking as a subject of education and he lectured in the class of Film and Cooking as art genre. "Each meal tells us who are the cooks, in which time and culture they live, in which region the live. They translate their existence with each meal and identify with the meal".

1997 Eat Art found a way into Documenta X with the work of Christian Höller and Rosemarie Trockel "A House for Pigs and People", focusing on the problematic of modern agriculture, industrial livestock farming and human manipulation of farm animals. Matthew Ngui, an artist born in Singapore, presented at the same Documenta his interactive installation and performance 'You can order and eat delicious poh-piah'. In 2002 the renowned German art magazine Kunstforum international dedicated two whole volumes (Bd 159 and Bd 160) to Eating and Drinking in Art (Eating as artistic motif, food as art media and cooking and meals as event and interaction). Therein the 'Large Encyclopedia from A-Z of Eating and Drinking in Fine Arts' was published.

# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

## Project Structure

### Overall Concept and Project Direction Vienna:

Caroline Fekete-Kaiser, KulturAXE Vienna

### Project Direction Tokyo:

Hiroko Inoue

### Visual Design:

Katalin Mesterhazy

### Concept Table Landscape Transcultural:

Katalin Mesterhazy, Caroline Fekete-Kaiser

### Concept Fire-Table:

Martin Hablesreiter, Sonja Stummerer  
Model Development with Ko Oono  
and Japanese designers

### Concept Table-Fellowships:

Szymon Olszowski  
Realisation with Japanese photographer

### Photography:

Julia Erzberger, Szymon Olszowski

### Graphic Design:

Eszter Kapitany

### Web design:

Nicolas Kaiser

### Project participants

Kyoko Adanya-Baier  
Julia Erzberger  
Heidulf Gerngross  
Martin Hablesreiter  
Hiroko Inoue  
Elke Krasny  
Lena von Lapschina  
Katalin Mesterhazy  
Ko Oono  
Szymon Olszowski  
Katharina Razumovsky  
László László Révész  
Sonja Stummerer  
Naoto Suzuki and  
more participants from Japan



### Imprint concept

#### Editing, content and layout

Caroline Fekete-Kaiser

#### Visualisations S. 3/7/14

Katalin Mesterhazy  
S.3 with illustrations of C.Fekete-Kaiser,  
M.Hablesreiter, S.Stummerer

#### Photos

Szymon Olszowski, Hyakumi Saisai,  
Martin Hablesreiter, Daniel Spoerri et al.

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# Transcultural Eat-Art Japan-Austria

Recipe-collection 1  
Table landscape transcultural

