

# OpenStudio

A collection of art-making ideas by artists

## Harrell Fletcher's Learn About Your Neighborhood Food System

Determine a way to define your neighborhood. I'd suggest four square blocks in all directions around the place you live in or go to school, but you could do it some other way.

Walk around and note all of the places that sell food in your neighborhood. These could include stores, cafes, food carts, farmers markets, community gardens, etc.

Pick at least five of these places (try to come up with a diverse set, like one cafe, one restaurant, one store, one farmers market, and a food cart or something like that).

Contact the people who run each of those five places and ask them if you can observe and interview them (if someone says no then pick a new place). If they say yes, then spend some time at their place. Try to get access to back areas like kitchens and storage areas and make some drawings of what you see. Ask the people who work at the cafes and stores questions about where the food that they sell comes from and how they get it to their businesses. Write down the questions and answers. Ask other questions such as what motivates the people to sell food, what kind of food they like to eat, etc. See if someone will show you how to cook something that is sold at the restaurant, cafe, or food cart. Also see if you can be shown how the food is displayed at stores and farmers markets. Sample as many foods as you can and write some short reviews of your reactions. Write down everything that you learn. Really try to understand as much as you can about how each food place operates and functions.

Use your drawings, interviews, observation notes, and food reviews and turn them into a small reproducible book. Give a copy of your book to each of the people

**Materials:**  
Walking and conversation

**Materials:**  
+ Paper  
+ Pencil or pen  
+ Copier or printer

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you worked with and suggest that they keep another copy around for customers to peruse. You could also put together a web-based radio show about your neighborhood food system studies or construct a neighborhood food system exhibition at a local venue like a library or a park.

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## Artist Biography: Harrell Fletcher

Born in 1967 in Santa Maria, California  
Currently lives in Portland, Oregon

Harrell Fletcher received his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute and his MFA from California College of the Arts. He studied organic farming at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and went on to work on a variety of small, community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms, which impacted his work as an artist. Fletcher has produced a variety of socially engaged collaborative and interdisciplinary projects since the early 1990s. His work has been shown at SFMOMA; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; the Seattle Art Museum; the Matisse Museum, Le Cateau-Cambrésis, France; and Tate Modern, London. Fletcher was a participant in the 2004 Whitney Biennial and has work in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art; and the New Museum in New York; SFMOMA; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Berkeley Art Museum; the de Young; and the FRAC Centre in Brittany, France. From 2002 to 2009 Fletcher co-produced the art project and participatory website Learning to Love You More with filmmaker and actress Miranda July. Fletcher is an associate professor of art and social practice at Portland State University in Portland, Oregon.



Photo: Alex Baker