

BreadMatters III: Mediating Through Art and Bread **West Cork Arts Centre, Ireland**

BreadMatters III: Exhibition

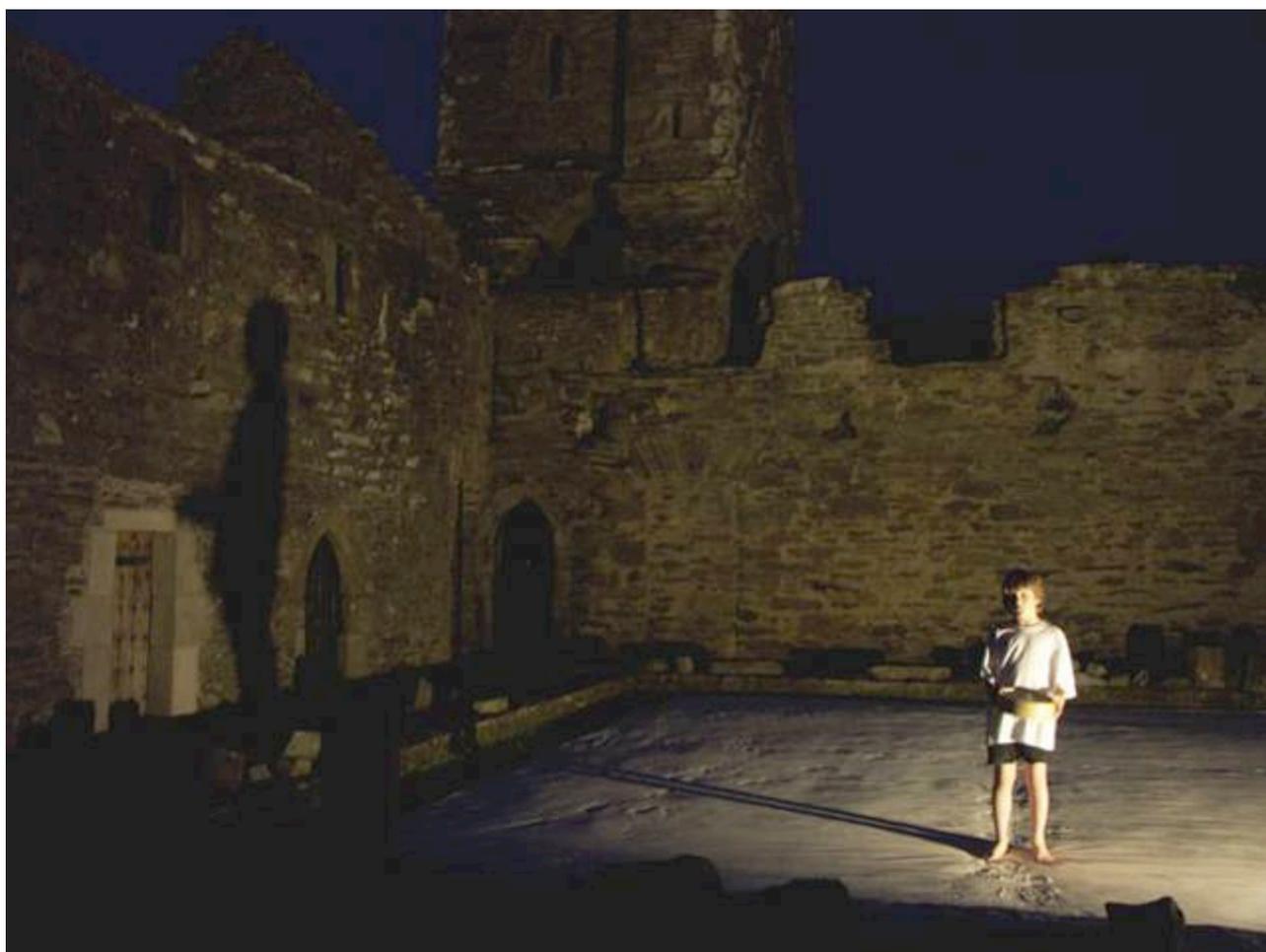
Inês Amado

Of a Place - Past, Present and Future is a collaborative project where Portuguese artist Inês Amado has been working with a group of children from Sherkin Island, involving them in a series of workshops; looking at the history of bread, its basic ingredients, process of making bread and its relationship to different cultures throughout the world.

The children were given disposable cameras and tape recorders and were asked to record any event that involved bread from the most basic of bread being buttered, to the buying, cutting, eating, and sharing of bread. On their tape recorders, they collected stories/memories of bread from their family members.

The outcome of this project is an installation and video projection at Sherkin Island Abbey. The installation comprises work made by the children, together with a sound piece focusing on the Abbey - this historical marker in the landscape being a connecting point between people and cultures.

A video projection of the children's performance was presented at The Abbey, Sherkin Island on Saturday 17 September at 8.45pm



Alexandra do Carmo in collaboration with Alison Knowles

Roggenbrot is a video work that investigates collaborative production in art between Portuguese artist Alexandra do Carmo and American artist Alison Knowles. The starting point came from Alison Knowles' piece *Bread and Water*, where the two elements of the title are paralleled through images

of bread that double as specific topographical profiles of rivers. For *Roggenbrot*, the artists baked bread together in upstate New York at Alison Knowles' studio. The journey along the Hudson river between both artists is energised by a series of resonances-- the site of the practice is extended to other domains such as the river and the place of living.

The piece is originally composed by three video projections, *Roggenbrot*, flanked on either side by video footage of the Hudson river. For *BreadMatters III* only the middle video of the *Roggenbrot* installation will be shown. In this video, two narratives are interwoven—a static framed situation inside the studio where the artists are discussing the project and by opposition, the actual making in an outside dynamic context where the practice becomes richer.



Frederica B. Duarte

Scope is a series of drawings whose starting point are microscopic images of bread yeast, based on the extraordinary capacity of these fungi and their ability to invert scale. Bread yeast, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, or baker's yeast, is a type of one-celled fungi, which is reproduced by a process called *budding*. This microscopic yeast has a macroscopic effect on bread dough. Portuguese artist Frederica B. Duarte installed a drawing directly onto the gallery wall at WCAC.



Jan Gryka

Polish artist Jan Gryka presented a mixed media installation *Particles of Forms – Tiny Bits of Meaning* using found objects, flour and water at the Abbey, Sherkin Island



Siún Hanrahan

Irish artist, Siún Hanrahan's work, *A Tale of Bread*, takes the form of a book, presented on a table.

"For me, bread is connectedness and communion. Conversation is connectedness and communion. Conversation is central to meaning, meaning emerges in the encounter with others. It is in and through conversation that identity is constructed. Migration, emigration and immigration are different positions within conversation (the encounter with others). These ideas and relationships between them are explored in three chapters – Milling, Baking and Eating. Each chapter will be built around a tale about bread, capturing and then echoing and interrogating rituals and symbols associated with the different moments and processes in bread making. It is an interweaving of ideas, an interweaving enacted within and between chapters."



Maria Lino

Maria und der Vater (Maria and her Father) was screened at West Cork Arts Centre on Thursday 15 September at 8.00pm. This video piece is about this Portuguese artist going back to her roots after a long period of being away. On one level, it is a history piece and on another it is about memory. The artist is reviving her childhood through the rituals and traditions of another time, traditions that are still present but almost gone. She engages the

village in the simple act of drawing, making parallels between them and herself and observes the traditional processes of threshing, kneading, making, baking and ultimately sharing bread.

Alice Maher

Bread Tree was first made in 1987 as a commission for the grounds of University College Cork. It was the first installation that Irish artist Alice Maher made and the first work in which she utilised the organic and the ephemeral, and so was a catalyst for many future works and approaches to art, particularly in the light of her use of materials – nettles, berries, hair, bees etc. Alice Maher was asked to recreate *Bread Tree* especially for this event at West Cork Arts Centre.



John Newling

Happiness is not a right involves the action of stamping a series of text stamps onto a gallery wall through a stencil made up of the words HAPPINESS IS NOT A RIGHT.

Once the stencil has been densely filled it will be removed from the wall and the words left clearly delineated. After the action has been performed the stamps will also be shown on the floor in front of the text. The action will take place at WCAC on Friday 16 September from 10.00am to 7.00pm.

Over many years I have observed and commented on the thoughts and desires that spring from deep within us. I have been interested by the way our fears and our loves, our beliefs and our faith are manifested in our lives; similarly the way that risk and happiness, repetition and distinction are represented in the rituals of our private and public lives. The making of notes and editing them into essays has been an important part of my working process. Each essay has given me the chance to reflect on things that I have seen, heard and experienced; they have served as a method of researching a project and become a key to the critical understanding of my work; they consider questions that we all reflect upon at some time or another. Questions become the leaven of our lives; they become the instigators of change and the basis of the choices we make. The essay 'Transactions and Agreements' is made up of a series of observations on these patterns and rituals, the questions we ask and the choices we make as a consequence.



The stencil HAPPINESS IS NOT A RIGHT that has evolved from the 'Transactions and Agreements' text is a material manifestation of the essay. However the real transaction is that the stencil, and the questions held within it, may instigate thoughts, observations and questions in the people attending the exhibition.

Abigail O'Brien

Irish artist Abigail O'Brien made the sculpture, *Thirty Slices of Bread* for BreadMatters III. The familiar sliced pan is a contemporary icon of convenience and modern

living. Today there is a dilemma between what is perceived as a basic family staple and factory baked, shop bought goods. The white slice has become vilified and unless presented as melba toast or a convenient base for canapés, it has no role in our more sophisticated diet. Through the intervention of casting, the pan is preserved and raised to a new status. Stripped of its wrapper, aroma free and burnt out, the slices are encapsulated in a timeless conceit.



Adrigole Women's Group with artists Rachel Parry and Eileen O'Sullivan

"Every session began with us sitting round the table sharing stories, memories and concerns over a cup of tea and a piece of home baking made by one of the group". *Putting Bread on the Table*

was part of the Cork 2005 / Credit Union Residencies Programme in partnership with the Arts Council, Cork City Council and Cork County Council. A group of local women from the Caha Centre, Adrigole's Family Resource Centre worked with West Cork-based artist Rachel Parry and musician Eileen O'Sullivan. For *The Table*, images of each woman's hands cast in bread, have been transferred onto the surface of a 100 year old Adrigole kitchen table together with recipes for our baking and snippets of stories and conversations. Incorporated within the table is the sound piece *Nourish, Sustain, Hold*.

Nigel Rolfe

Irish-based artist, Nigel Rolfe presented his new performance *In the Condition of Dust* on the evening of Friday 16 September.



Bartolomeu dos Santos

Everything is not what it should be is an acrylic, charcoal and pencil drawing by Portuguese artist, Bartolomeu dos Santos who uses the theme of the project as a form of protest against war and violence.



The image draws on a European folklore tradition – shades of the tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin are evident in the representation of the rats. Within dos Santos' lifetime, Portugal has undergone sweeping cultural change - from a totalitarian right-wing dictatorship to participation in a global culture that embraces American consumerism.

The connection with bread is obvious, the reference to America, no less obvious. Most of us have eaten hamburgers (and some can be very good), but the association of bread with fast food is another matter, which I equate with the destruction of

traditional values as well as with the imposition of alien forms of eating (and drinking) by a country, that when opposed, resorts to violence and war, to impose on us its peculiar notion of freedom.

Ruth Weinberg

British artist Ruth Weinberg's piece *The Braided Challah*, is based on Jewish tradition.

The Challah is the Jewish Ritual Bread of the Ashkenazi world (the Jews that came from Poland, Germany & Russia) it is bound up with Jewish culture and identity and is a bread of celebration.

The Braided Challah which is made with eggs is the Sabbath and holiday bread. It is surrounded by folklore and tradition and loaded with symbolism. On festive occasions a blessing is said over two loaves symbolizing the two portions of manna that was given to the children of Israel during their exodus from Egypt.

The name Challah is derived from the Hebrew word used for portion, in the biblical commandment *'of the first of your dough you shall give unto the lord a portion for a gift throughout your generations.'* Jews were Biblically commanded to separate from their doughs one twenty-fourth and give it to the kohanim (priests) every Sabbath.

The Book Of Jewish Food –Claudia Roden

'The Braided Challah has a special spiritual significance as a reminder of life and the inevitability of death. It incorporates in its making the ancestral memory of braiding and plaiting the challah. It is also a reminder of the plait cut off by a young bride to be restored on the day of her death.'

Sacred Food: A History of Cooking for Spiritual Nourishment – Elizabeth Luard



Michael Wright

British artist Michael Wright presented a book of photographs and a DVD piece exploring the symbolic as it relates to the artist's own experience of family, displacement and emigration.

"Human nature is expressed through external ritualised behaviour which carries imbedded meaning. The superficial appearance of these habitual actions may often appear to signify fragmentation and irreconcilable cultural difference however the process of art is a way of negotiating cultural difference, effectively working in the space between one emotional cultural space and another, allowing for understanding and empathy. Art can negotiate between internal and external, between present and past between the emotional and cultural spaces that separate and mark difference. My practice is concerned with the way the symbolic - that which signifies meaning - breaks through the surface of daily domestic routines. Sometimes the work is generated

through simple observation and attentiveness to the subject and at other times these observations will prompt the negotiation of a more choreographed performance or installation”.



BreadMatters III: Forum

10.30 – 10.50 Inês Amado

BreadMatters

Portuguese artist and project co-ordinator, Inês Amado introduced the *BreadMatters* Forum through an overview of the project and its outcomes.



10.50 – 11.20 Gerald O'Brien

Local historian, Gerald O'Brien discussed the links between West Cork and mainland Europe and how the past history of West Cork has shaped the present.

11.20 – 12.00 Małgorzata Sady

To Share Bread You Do Not Need A Knife

Polish artist, Małgorzata Sady presented *To Share Bread You Do Not Need A Knife*, a juxtaposition of word (poetry), image (film) and sound (music) to evoke space and open up the potential for mediation and the exchange of thoughts.



1.30 – 2.00 Mo Thorp
Configuring Desire

British artist Mo Thorp presented this video/performance work which combined theoretical texts with images (in this case, of issues of bread as symbolic of the 'law') to investigate issues of desire and a demand for satisfaction. The work addressed issues of subjectivity and identity and the complex relationship of the individual and the social order. Thorp made particular reference to psychoanalytic theorizing of the subject, in this case, the Great Famine, and considered how desire and satisfaction are in a constant state of fluid re-making not unlike the folding and shaping of the daily act of making bread.



2.00 – 2.30 Luis B. Gil
Blind Eagle

Portuguese composer Luis B. Gil presented a sound piece exploring facets of hunger and where it can lead.

2.30 – 3.00 Henrique Pinto

From Gratuity to Solidarity: the Breaking of Bodies

Portuguese writer Henrique Pinto addressed the *gratuity of existence* and *solidarity* - the interdependency of all that comes into the world and the resulting responsibility that we owe to each other. Bread, as a metaphor, underlined a call to an ethical transformation of what there is and of our selves, as an artistic shaping brought about by the breaking of bread, or by what Pinto calls '*the breaking of bodies*'.

3.00 – 3.30 Eileen O'Sullivan

Putting Bread on the Table

Eileen O'Sullivan who worked with Rachel Parry and Adrigole Women's Group, discussed the project and the development of the sound piece *Nourish, Sustain, Hold*

WCAC Primary Schools Programme



BreadMatters III was used as the resource to the 2005 / 2006 Primary Schools' Classroom-based Project programme involving 26 schools and 45 classes from the West Cork region. The teachers and children worked with WCAC Schools Co-ordinator Alison Trim and with artist Sarah Ruttle on the theme of 'Harvest' leading to an exhibition at WCAC in January 2006.