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EXEGESIS

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REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (IN VISUAL ARTS)**

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TITLE

Engaging audiences to value and invest in participatory art practice through reciprocal and relational interactions.

Abstract

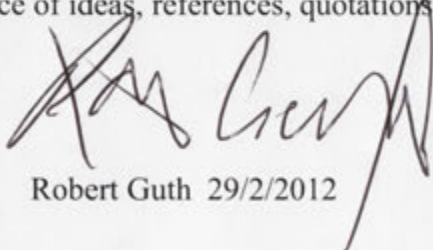
How audiences value, engage and invest in participatory art.

This research project examines certain forms of exchange and reciprocity in participatory art from a practitioner's perspective. It refers to aspects of Nicolas Bourriaud's Relational Aesthetics, touches on the food works of Rirkrit Tiravanija and uses practice-led research to examine audience interactions. In each research event the audience was given the opportunity to participate in some form of exchange, mostly involving food. Eight small research events and one larger work (staged in four editions) were produced. These works are examined as a means of gaining further knowledge of the stagecraft involved in my research practice and developing theoretical frameworks that can be used to better explain the interactions occurring between people during these events.

These theoretical frameworks shift from Relational Aesthetics into the social science fields of exchange theory and selected models of indirect reciprocity. The outcomes from this investigation include a practical body of technical knowledge in making participatory art. The development of this expertise in practice-led research can be seen in the increasing complexity of the research events, culminating in the final participatory event for examination. Tools were also developed, which focus on the indirect and direct reciprocal outcomes expected by participants and artist, based on their engagement. These tools can equally be applied to the deconstruction of existing works to examine the mechanics of interaction or for the planning of future works.

Declaration of originality

I, Robert Guth, on the 29th February 2012, hereby declare that the exegesis here presented is the outcome of the research project undertaken during my candidacy, that I am the sole author unless otherwise indicated, and that I have fully documented the source of ideas, references, quotations and paraphrases attributed to other authors.



Robert Guth 29/2/2012

Acknowledgements

This is a draft of the welcome speech I intend to make at projects final event at Canberra Contemporary Art Space on the 30th of March 2012.

The nature of my participatory practice makes it hard to define the outer edges of who to acknowledge for assistance in the project. To begin with I know I can safely start with all of you this room. Each of you has contributed - is contributing to the project as I speak - and for that I thank you.

Beyond this circle it gets a bit muddy. Of course I owe a great deal to my families, Guths, Teos and Hunts, who have supported this project since before it was a project and will continue to support me after it has stopped being so well defined.

For supporting the project - as a project - I have to acknowledge my academic community. Student colleagues, lecturers supervisors, chairs, convenors, and the general staff at ANU. Without you and the framework you represent and maintain there would be no project, no findings, no outcomes, no rigour - just a bunch of people happily eating.

They would only be happily eating due to the assistance of all of my foodie friends and connections. Without having access to people knowledgeable about food I could never have developed the research events that took place.

Fellow practitioners in participatory practice deserve a mention. Without the network of known and unknown peers and mentors I would have been met with even greater incomprehension by participants when asked to: eat, dip, mold, smash or swap in the course of the research events.

All of those participants deserve a mention as well. I maintain it is participants that make these works function. Without engagement they are at best performances. With participants help – that is to say YOUR help they can be so much more for all of us.

At the start of this project I had the idea that at the end of every day, as a part of my practice I would write down all the people who helped contribute to the project. I lasted four days before it became obvious that even by the end of the day I could not remember everybody that supported the project in some way. Instead here is a list of those I remembered right at the end of the project. Can you all please join in giving them a round of applause.

Alex, Alister, Aliza, Amanda, Amy, Anna, Anni, Annika, Ben, Bob, Brad, Bruno, Cathy, Chaitanya, Charles, Chin Cheok, Chin Hee, Ciran, Clem, David, Da-Wu, Denise, Dennis, Effendy, Elizabeth, Elliot, Emily, Erin, Ewan, Gavin, Gok Kee, Gordon, Hamid, Hanna, Helen, Herman, Huw, Ian, James, Jason, Jay, Jennifer, Jenny, Jessica, Joanne, Johannes, John, Jono, Joseph, Joy, JP, Kate, Kaoru, Kathrine, Kirsten, Kit, Kurt, Le, Leo, Lou, Lucy, Margaret, Marty, Maya, Michael, Milenko, Mio, Nat, Nic, Nigel, Patsy, Paul, Peter, Richard, Rirkrit, Rizman, Robert, Robyn, Rodger, Ron, Selga, Shannon, Simon, Steven, Tien, Tony, Ursula, Winston, Ximena, Yim, Zack, Zai.

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INTRODUCTION

The area of participatory art is a growing and diversifying field. Works that identify as participatory span the spectrum of materiality from collaborative online drawing works¹ to anonymous interventions in public space, for example Yarn Bombing, which is dedicated to *Improving the Urban Landscape One Stitch at a Time*² by participants anonymously installing knitted interventions in public space. I describe my own participatory art-works as being in the middle of the field. They are generally events that run for a fairly short length of time and the audience is given an opportunity to directly participate in the work. This research project uses the methodology of practice-led research to explore my art making practice. Initially the project started with my interest in the theory of Relational Aesthetics, but it became apparent that Relational Aesthetics itself was not going to provide an adequate framework for considering my work and its reception. Rather, how my practice functions and is positioned in the field was explored using practice-led research.

In the course of research, frameworks from the social sciences, particularly anthropology, have been adapted to more closely examine specific facets of the practice. A particular focus for these methods has been the mechanisms of how participants interact and engage with, invest in and value the art-works in which they participate. By exploring how and why an audience interacts with my art-works, I develop and therefore propose a more detailed model of participation making participants' motivations clearer and more communicable. These systems can then be applied to the examination of existing art-works made by others and myself and also to the planning of future events. By using these frameworks, art-works can be made that are potentially richer in content and more satisfying for the participating audience.

What the research is about and how the project was constructed

What gave direction to this project is my interest in the audience's experience of art. My practice is founded on the belief that, as an artist, I have an obligation to communicate effectively to people who have made the choice to interact with my work. This research project has afforded me the opportunity to more closely examine audience interactions than I could have done in my regular practice.

Working within the framework of academic research has allowed the production of a very experimental body of work. In theory I could have made research works that failed to function as art-works, yet they would still have provided very useful data towards the research goals. For me this could only happen inside the research structure provided by academia. In the course of my practice when making participatory works in public the audience and I both have expectations around their experience. We all have the primary goal of it being rewarding and enjoyable. This project was an opportunity to test what can be asked from participants. While I did not set out to unsettle the audiences as Paul

1 P. Edmunds, <http://swarmsketch.com/> (accessed 2/2/2012).

2 <http://yarnbombing.com/> (accessed 2/2/2012).

Hendke did in his play *Offending the Audience*³ the intention was to find the limits of what was considered reasonable exchange. This tension can be seen late in the project with the fourth and final staging of the *Art-Is-An Bread* (2010-2011) research work.

As well as giving me the freedom to ‘fail’ in making art-works, the research framework provides a unique space for considering practice in different ways. In the course of my normal practice, examination of a work is based on its perceived success and failure. These conditions are linked to how the work functions within the (for want of better phrase) art world. Working in an academic framework implies that works are considered in a wider perspective and relative to a different set of frameworks. This project focuses on interaction between people and it was appropriate to move outside the art theoretical lexicon and adapt tools from the social sciences, using a model of indirect reciprocity that was developed from a sociobiological perspective, of basic biological imperatives⁴ and was an attempt to understand the place of altruism in society.⁵ These specialised academic frameworks did not replace the normal way I review individual works in the course of my practice. This perspective has been built over years of continually critiquing art with making work in mind. This is my default method of looking at art, a practice of critiquing that is part of my discipline and contributed to the research throughout the project. This position was however most useful in the first half of the project when I was trying to connect Relational Aesthetics to my practice. It provided tools to allow me to directly test what I was reading by constructing research events. If I had been satisfied by the usefulness of Relational Aesthetics and its relevance to my practice at that point the project would have been simpler. The research would have taken a more applied course with the conceptual frameworks progressing perhaps as far as various cultural forms of hospitality.

Participatory, Performance and Relational Art

Participatory art, for the purposes of this project, is: **any art-work that requires audience interaction/engagement for the work to exist.** This is a development of the multiple definitions proposed in *The art of participation, 1950 till now*⁶ that share the a central feature of audience action being necessary and central to defining this kind

3 Paul Handke, German original *Publikumsbeschimpfung*, Frankfurt (1966). English transl *Offending the Audience*, London (1970).

4 Edward Wilson in his 1975 book *On Human Nature* defines sociobiology: “The extension of population biology and evolutionary theory to social organization”. Used this way (as by Tullberg) it is free of the racial and cultural overtones that are often associated with the term.

5 Jan Tullberg, “On Indirect Reciprocity: The Distinction Between Reciprocity and Altruism, and a comment on Suicide Terrorism” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 63(5) (2004) 1193-1212.

6 Rudolf Frieling, Boris Groys, Robert Atkins and Lev Manovich. *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*. (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2009).

of work. It also provides the definition of how such a work can fail. The only way a participatory art-work can completely fail at all levels of participation is if there is an absence of an audience. Even if the audience chooses not to interact with an art-work it is still not a complete failure as the participants are still engaging with the concepts being presented.

Relational art can be described as a subset of participatory art, in which additional to audience interaction the work contains significant content about social interactions. Bourriaud is quite clear on this point when he formalised the field in his book *Relational Aesthetics* published in French in 1998 and in English translation in 2002, Relational Art is, “A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.”⁷

With one exception (*Baking in the Gallery* 2010), my individual research events are not primarily relational in content. Rather they are participatory, requiring guided audience interaction and containing very specific conceptual content. This content is based on what I wish to convey in the art-work. In most of the works in this project this relates to perceptions of value and exchange. I believe Bourriaud would describe this an intrusion of my “private space” in an art-work as it limits the possibility of exploring, “the whole of human relations and their social context”⁸ internal to the work.

The growth of participatory art is linked to the general diversification of acknowledged forms of art in the twentieth century. Allen Kaprow’s “Happenings”, a term he first used in his 1958 article *The legacy of Jackson Pollock* is generally accepted as an important marker in the development of the performance art form, due to the interactive or participatory way the audience was made to relate to the performers. This begins the historical progression of the art form that this project investigates. Kaprow’s first happening *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959)⁹ has several elements that make it of interest in examining my participatory art practice. Participating artists and audiences were given scripts to follow that dictated their actions as the event took place. This is often considered from the perspective of modern theatres attempts to break the “fourth wall” between the actors and audience.

From my starting point as a visual artist I see it slightly differently. It is an invitation for the audience to directly participate in what would otherwise be a static work of art.

The way I have been describing the difference between performance and participatory art to participants for the last three years is with this example.

“Performance art is a artist standing naked in a gallery hitting themselves on the

7 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. (French original *Esthétique relationnelle*, 1998) (Paris: Les Presses du Reel, 2002) 113.

8 Ibid.

9 Allen Kaprow, *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*, (New York City: Reuben Gallery, 1959).

head with a fish. Participatory art is giving a fish to everyone who comes to the gallery and giving them instructions to hit the artist on the head."

In part this description is drawn from Marina Abramovic's work *Rhythm 0* performed at studio Morra, Naples 1974.¹⁰

In *Rhythm 0* Abramovic remained passive for six hours while the audience was invited to do anything they wanted to/with her using the collection of seventy two objects provided by the artist. She describes the process: "In the beginning the public was very much playing with me, later on they became more and more aggressive."¹¹ This work is a good example of both participatory art and Relational Art. It is clearly participatory as it only existed because an audience was present and interacted with the work. However it is also Relational Art as it involves "...the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space"¹² in the range of interactions allowable between artist and the audience. These interactions progress from "playing" together through a variety of human relations all the way to the aggressive act of pointing a loaded gun at the artist's head. The limit of behaviour is not internal to the work, what stops the participant from shooting the artist is the external structures of the law.

A participatory artist who has been particularly important to this project is Rirkrit Tiravanija, identified by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* as a maker of Relational Art. In particular his work *Untitled 1992 (free)*,¹³ has been a touchstone for its use of food and social forms. The work consisted of two main elements, moving usually unseen offices and administration areas of the gallery into the exhibition space, and serving free food cooked on site for the duration of the exhibition. This is representative of Tiravanija works used by Bourriaud as an example of Relational Art. He maintains that in this type of work

...the purpose is not conviviality, but the product of this conviviality, otherwise put, a complex form that combines a formal structure, objects made available to visitors, and the fleeting image issuing from collective behaviour.¹⁴

I suggest that *Rhythm 0* equally fills these requirements, particularly in the continuing "fleeting image" that we continue to engage with in documentation.

Four narrative vignettes that inform the methodology

In the twelve months before applying for this program four experiences stand out as markers in the development of my interests in contemporary participatory practice and public performance. These all contribute to the methodology of the project by framing my general interests in value mentioned previously.

10 Abramovic, Marina, *Rhythm 0*, (Naples: Studio Morra, 1974).

11 Marina Abramovic from MoMA Multimedia, *Marina Abramović. Rhythm 0. 1974* <http://www.moma.org/explore/multimedia/audios/190/1972>

12 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 113.

13 Tiravanija, R. *Untitled 1992 (Free)* (New York: Gavin Brown Enterprises 1992).

14 Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 83.

My formal introduction to participatory art and Relational Aesthetics started in 2007 when I enrolled in master classes with Rirkrit Tiravanija in Singapore as an extension to my Masters of Fine Arts degree at Lasalle College of Fine Arts Singapore. This first experience of engaging with Tiravanija was frustrating and rewarding, allowing me to relate a recurring thread in my own practice to a larger narrative in contemporary art. Previously I considered myself a photographer who liked to cater well for openings with food that engaged and entertained the audience. After my experience with Tiravanija I realised that I had also been something else: a photographer experimenting with relational forms in an effort to widen the audience's experience of exhibition and the work. This was highly satisfying as it allowed me to link a part of my history and former practice to my new area of interest in audience engagement and relational interactions.

Rirkrit did not choose to engage with the class through discussions of art theory and cheerfully evaded any direct questions about his work in relation to movements in conceptual framing, Relational Aesthetics or art theory generally. Taking this stance he shares a methodology with Lim Tzay Chuen, Lee Wen and Tang Da Wu, who have an excellent art-theoretical understanding of their own practice but allow others to provide those frameworks. At that point I enjoyed the style of teaching and tried to understand Tiravanija's process by imitation and role play, in this I was partially successful, not to the extent of being able to communicate my insight to others, but well enough to arrive at recognition of some key matters to develop in my practice. From this embodied knowledge developed during the workshop, I wanted to try and develop my limited non-verbal grasp of the field (and Tiravanija's work in particular) into something more robust and academic that I could share with my peers. In part the frustration of not being able to communicate these understandings to others prompted the qualitative research element of this project.

At the time it seemed that the framework of Relational Aesthetics would provide the key to being able to make participatory art comprehensible to others. I came to this conclusion due to the strong association between Tiravanija and Relational Aesthetics seen in both the core text for Relational Aesthetics (*Relational Aesthetics*) and the reviews of Tiravanija's work I was reading.¹⁵ Thus I came to choose Relational Aesthetics as a starting theoretical perspective at the commencement of the Doctoral program.

In 2007 as well as meeting Rirkrit I visited the Venice Biennale, and took part in two other participatory/lived art-works. This was between finishing my Masters and applying for admission into the PhD program. Each experience in its own way influenced the sort of art I wanted to make and what my area of research should be.

15 Jerry Saltz, "A short history of Rirkrit Tiravanija," *Art in America*, Feb 1996, 82-85. and Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2004), 104-105.

The first event was being in Venice for the *vernissage* of the Biennale as a manager/assistant for Rizman Putra, a Singaporean performance artist. Rushing from one work to the next, finding the best parties, seeing the exhibitions, watching the crowds of tourists and engagement of art professionals, all helped me to understand the interfaces between the contemporary art industry, artists and audiences. I also came to understand some of the limitations of the biennale form. I observed that within the context of an event like the Venice Biennale works have to sit relative to each other and the ongoing event. It becomes very difficult to separate an art-work from the spectacle of the event itself. This lessens the importance of individual art objects while emphasising the importance of the social structures that surround them. Finding out more about how the social interacts with the art objects became an interest in of itself.

The next experience was *Open Space Kassel*,¹⁶ which became my first experience of taking part in a modified form of Beuys's social sculpture. For a week forty graduate students and lecturers from seven geographically-spread art academies ranging from Singapore to Finland lived and ate communally in shelters made by first year architecture students. The participants, led by a student from the Slow Food University in Turin cooked the meals and chores were shared. There were daily discussions on readings, studio based presentations and time to visit the Documenta exhibitions.

This experience provided me with an insight into working with an engaged and art-educated audience. This proved to be of value in the middle of my doctoral project when making the works described in Chapter Three. The student works that were made, and the just-functioning nature of the event provided me with the confidence to work with this kind of audience. Also, one of my works from this event *Gift* (2007) (Appendix E) is my first participatory work that discusses distribution and the value of labour. I realised it was acceptable, perhaps even inherent to the medium, to produce experimental participatory works that were not necessarily fully resolved as part of academic research.

The third event in which I was involved was back in Singapore towards the end of 2007: the establishment of *Postmuseum*,¹⁷ an independent artist-run space. It was the project of Woon Tien Wei and Jennifer Teo as an outgrowth of the curatorial collective *P-10*. My role was establishing the food service in *Food#03*, the associated vegetarian café that was meant to be the semi-autonomous financial engine of the institution. Unsurprisingly there were several discussions about the actual value of what we were doing to various stakeholder communities and how that was not fairly represented in financial returns. Interestingly, another graduate research art-work that considers the value of objects comes out of this time and place. Woon Tien Wei and Jennifer Teo's *Really Really Free Market* (shown in Fukuoka (2009), Melbourne (2010) and Singapore (2009 - present) was developed. The format for that work is borrowed from

16 <http://www.openspacekassel.de/> (accessed 2/2/2012)

17 www.post-museum.org/ (accessed 7/1/2012) .

the larger *Really Really Free Market* movement.¹⁸ The public is invited to bring objects and services to be freely given away during a market event. In their version Woon and Teo host the market in art spaces, prompting discussion about the use and value of the gallery.

My involvement in this venture strengthened my interest in the use of food in participatory art. It was the first time that I had been directly involved providing food for money. In contrast to my previous photographic practice it showed me how easy it is to elicit a response from an audience by using food. What I did not realise at the time was how hard it was to move the audience's response past a visceral appreciation of what they were eating to a consideration of anything else. This is one of the areas developed over the course of my project.

During that time in Singapore I was writing my proposal for this doctoral project. In its formulation can be seen a coalescence of my interests of the time, blending Southeast Asian performance/participatory art, value, labour, audience interaction and Relational Aesthetics. Reviewing that proposal now, I can see a lack of separation between life, art-making and research which was consistent with my activities and practice of the time.

Naturally all research outcomes, no matter which perspective they arrived at, relate to my practice of participatory art. It is by applying the findings to the practice of making art-works that the full range of diverse findings can be used. Thus I came to the formulation of my research questions.

Research Questions

How and why do audiences engage in participatory art?

What and how much can be asked from the audience in participatory art?

What expectations do participants in participatory art have?

What use is the framework of Relational Aesthetics in my participatory practice?

How can I communicate the concepts of my practice by engaging the audience?

What frameworks best describe how I perceive audience actions?

How can I engage the audience and communicate conceptually?

How does perception of the artist's performance effect participants' expectations and experience of an event?

How can food be mobilised to engage and communicate with audiences in my practice?

What is the nature of exchange that takes place between the participant and artist?

18 <http://www.reallyreallyfree.org/> (accessed 9/1/2012).

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY

Modes of Research Used

In its content and methods this research project conforms to Carol Gray's description of practice-led research,

*...initiated in practice, where questions, problems, challenges are identified and formed by the needs of practice and practitioners; and secondly that the research is carried out through using predominantly methodologies and specific methods familiar to us as practitioners.*¹⁹

What Gray does not touch on is the method of communicating the research outcomes. This to me was a central feature in planning the methodology of this project. In academic research presenting finished art-works, often objects, as the final research outcome, is the most common practice. This does not suit the character of ephemeral participatory art events. Researchers frequently have to rely on documentation to experience this kind of work. I suspect that Gray assumes that in such cases documentation is a sufficient means of communicating the results due to the familiarity of the "specific methods" employed. My understanding from photographic practice (both as an exhibitor and performance documenter) indicates that there is a large gap in experience between the art-work and the documentation of participatory art.

As an example, even in my simplest event-based work (*Grill-a Soup* (2008)) I was experimenting with: materials, documentation, reciprocity, stage presence of the artist, participant to participant interaction, and the audiences' reception of various food types. Communicating results in all these areas to those not present at the event poses challenges. This has led me to design parts of the project with an element of qualitative research built in. The aim of that part of the project is to create research outcomes that are particularly well suited for dissemination with documentation and writing.

Brad Haseman in his essay *Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm*²⁰ develops this difference between practice-led, as described by Gray, and other forms of qualitative research. One key difference is in the nature of how findings are reported. The practice-led or "performative research" reporting relies on the use of "symbolic data" in the form of finished art-works whereas the qualitative relies on "symbolic words."²¹ The ephemeral nature of practice-led events (the "performative research") of this project means that I have to convert the symbolic data into a range of documentation including writing. As such it moves from being solely practice-led

19 C. Grey, "Inquiry Through Practice: Developing appropriate Research Strategies," from Brad Haseman's "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm," in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 147.

20 Brad Haseman, "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm" in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, ed. Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 147-157.

21 *Ibid.*: 150.

research to being qualitative research by Haseman's definitions, too much information is lost in the transition from one form to another. As I have come to realise in the process of this project this is not the case when a qualitative output is built in to the research from the beginning.

In recognition of this potential problem in communicating practice led findings from research in participatory art as "symbolic words" the methodology of the project has developed with two streams of communicable outcomes in mind. The first is art-work based – this consists of presenting art-works with the audience being able to access the research directly. This is a presentation of the "symbolic data" from the project. The second is based in writing and talking about aspects of how my participatory practice operates. This is mobilising "symbolic words" to communicate to audiences specifically interested in the stagecraft and mechanics of my practice.

Keeping these eventual outcomes in mind, each event provides a dual opportunity for research: testing a range of conceptual ideas, as well as making observations of how audiences reacted to the offer of participation. These observations form the basis for qualitative data that is then explored using the theoretical frameworks developed across the project. Using these frameworks allows me to consider how my practice functions and how to locate that practice in contemporary art. The potential for my work is also assisted as I adjust and develop my methods.

At the same time the events provided an opportunity to hone the craft of participatory art. Again using Haseman's framework for the delivery of research outcomes in practice-led research, these are examples of "Performative research." The underlying method has been to test ideas developed in one stream by applying findings from the other. This method has consistently moved towards the research goals of understanding participants' levels of engagement and investment in my participatory practice.

How Relational Aesthetics moved from the centre to the edge of the project.

Bourriaud in the glossary of *Relational Aesthetics* defines Relational Art as:

*A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.*²²

To me at the time this seemed a reasonable way to make the participatory art I had experienced and that I wanted to make comprehensible. By expanding the boundaries away from traditional art theory and into the "whole of human relations" I saw the potential to explore the participatory, extended duration and lived art-works that I had seen in the previous year. The plan was to employ Relational Aesthetics in the

22 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 113.

description and analysis of other artists' works and in the planning my own art-work. The intended outcome of this was to provide support for the utility of Relational Aesthetics. In doing this I would contribute to art theory by adding some artists to the Relational Aesthetics canon and creating a new body of art-work that had functioned as studio research. This is not how the project actually developed.

Instead, the design of some of the early research events were informed by concepts encountered in the major critiques of Relational Aesthetics. The criticisms fall into two areas that influenced the research in different ways. There is one body that concentrates on the basic premise in Relational Aesthetics of democratic exchange between participants insisting that they are governed by the same hierarchical relationships as appear in the wider community.²³ Examining this provided some of the framing for participant interaction in the first few research events. A second body of criticism takes Bourriaud to task over his ignoring historical precedents in both art history and philosophical thought.²⁴ These observations gave me a direction to look for examples of other artists works and larger areas of theory to examine.

I arrived at the research questions stated at the end of this introduction in part as a result of my dissatisfaction with the models describing audience engagement in participatory art used in Relational Aesthetics. The most pertinent of those relate to social structures internal to Relational art-works.²⁵ Nicolas Bourriaud states in *Relational Aesthetics* that these social interactions are utopic and democratic forms of conviviality.²⁶ The counterpoint to this is that it is not possible for the artist to divorce art-works from the hierarchy of social interactions and obligations that govern wider society. I chose to test these claims and counter-claims using studio-based research.

One of the streams of research that led to the examination of participatory art as gift exchange was started at this point. Stewart Martin in his paper '*A Critique of Relational Aesthetics*' points towards this area by introducing his Marxist/neo-Marxist interpretations around value and commodity to relational art-works.

*...overcoming the taboo on presenting the social has become a central task of contemporary art. Relational Aesthetics pursues precisely this task, but indifferent to the contradictions of art's heteronomy and autonomy within capitalist culture.*²⁷

The "contradictions" that Martin sees can be in part dealt with by considering the

23 For example, Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110, (Fall 2004): 51-79.

24 Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics," *Third Text*, July 2007. 384.

25 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.," Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics." Anthony Downey, "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics."

26 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*.

27 Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics," 384.

exchanges not in an economy based on exchange of commodities but rather as part of a gift economy. This thought is developed in chapter five as part of the defining the placement of participatory art in economies of reciprocity.

Research areas based in the debates found in the literature surrounding Relational Aesthetics were identified. Areas of inquiry were: physical logistics, the place of conceptual content in participatory art and the dynamics of interactions between participants. These areas were all framed around the projects' concerns of audience experience. How do participants conceptually and formally engage with participatory work? What is their perception of the nature of interaction? What do they expect from the artist? How do participants engage with the formal appearance of an art-work? These questions formed the foundation for the planning of research events described in the next chapter. As the studio research progressed these questions naturally developed and new ones were added.

Democratic, Open, Convivial Art? Far too simple

Critics repeatedly point out that participant interactions are far more complex than the *comfortable togetherness*²⁸ that they see as Bourriaud's model of human exchange within the art-works. This line of criticism appears in some of the earliest critiques²⁹ and perhaps the author most strongly identified with developing this line of argument is Claire Bishop. In her paper *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*³⁰ she takes particular exception to the nature of the exchange that takes place. Her argument centres on the idea that exchanges of the kind created by these relational works are not, as Bourriaud states, democratic. Rather she argues all these forms of exchange are based on an antagonistic interaction.

This is also pointed out by Dave Beech who, while citing Bishop, extends and clarifies the position.

*What Bishop left out of her critique of Bourriaud's use of dialogue as a synonym of democratic social relations is that dialogue is itself a carrier of antagonism and conflict.*³¹

These observations about the nature of discussion and exchange are also present in a wider discussion about the maintenance of power structures,³² and the nature of hospitality. On the basis of these authors' various views ranging from the idealised democratic conviviality of Bourriaud to the aggressive act of giving framed by Derrida³³

28 Dave Beech, "The Art of the Encounter," *Art Monthly* 278 (Jul/Aug 2004): 46

29 For an example see: Hal Foster, "Arty Party," *London Review of Books*, 4 Dec 2003.

30 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics."

31 Dave Beech, "The Art of the Encounter."

32 S. Zizek, "Afterward," in *The Politics of Aesthetics*, transl. Gabriel Rockhill, London and New York: Continuum. 2004.

33 Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality : Cultural Memory in*

I drew some conclusions about participatory art and theorists. Firstly, theorists are, with few exceptions not artists. This means that they are always bound to be interpreting art-works and not making them. Being engaged in studio research I had the opportunity to test their interpretations in a unique way. Secondly the appearance of an interaction between individuals is dependent on the observers' point of view. It seemed reasonable that from Bourriaud's perspective as curator of these events that they may function as democratic.

Participatory or Relational Art?

A cursory survey of the field found large amounts of work identified as Relational Art but not seeming to fill Bourriaud's criteria from his definition in *Relational Aesthetics*. While all of the works described are participatory and have some formal resemblance to Relational Art, it could not be said that they "took as their starting point the whole of human relations and their social context." However, as Bourriaud himself says, the wide uptake of the theory has sometimes led to a simplistic aping of the forms which, "Has at times generated a sort of caricatured vulgate (artists-who-serve-food-at-the-opening)"³⁴ without the conceptual content, relating to social relations which he sees as critical.

The appeal of Relational Aesthetics at the start of the project

In hindsight, my trust in the potential of Relational Aesthetics was naive. It seemed that an operational theory of participatory art that was recent, popular (or at least topical) and emanated from a definite source would be an elegant way to examine participatory art. Statements like Martin Stewart's in his *Critique of Relational Aesthetics* only served to make Relational Aesthetics more interesting,

*... despite its theoretical and historical precariousness ... - hardly disqualifications in the history of the genre - this text is currently recognised as one of the more ambitious and compelling presentations of a framework for certain novel dimensions of art.*³⁵

Undoubtedly Relational Aesthetics has some useful perspectives for the project, particularly its focus on the social interaction between participants. It was very attractive that the social should take centre stage at the expense of both the formalist concerns in the viewing of art and historical precedents,³⁶ as the nature of interaction between participants is at the heart of this research project.

the Present, Stanford University Press, 2000.

34 Nicolas Bourriaud (transl Herman Jeanie), *Postproduction*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2002, 7.

35 Stewart Martin, "Critique of Relational Aesthetics."

36 George Baker, "Introduction to 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 49-50.

Experimental methodology

The form of practice-led research this project used shares its pattern of cyclic research with Participatory Action Research³⁷, a social science technique often associated with research that aims to effect social change at the same time as producing academic outcomes. Core to both techniques is the cyclical research that moves between the theoretical and the practice-led³⁸ with time for reviewing and consideration in between. Understanding and using Participatory Action Research is one of the areas of expertise I have developed over the course of my project. In the later work, *Art-Is-An Bread* (2011-2012) (discussed in Chapter Four), aspects of Participatory Action Research have been more fully integrated with a clearer division between the research outcomes of the project and the outcomes of the research event for participants.

All of my early research works were simple in content, being primarily concerned with testing the limits of Relational Aesthetics. The research works *Baked, Boiled and Fried* (2008) and *Birthday Cookup* (2008) both fall into this category. At the same time as fulfilling that relatively simple function, the studio research works also provided insights into the dynamics of interactions during participatory art events, particularly how audiences engage with food and how they respond to conceptual content in a participatory art-work.

My observations of these interactions were informed by my studying a range of works by Southeast Asian artists that operate by the artist (or the artists' agent) directly engaging the audience through food. These included: Rirkrit Tiravanija (Thailand), Mella Jaarsma (Indonesia), Matthew Ngui (Singapore) and Amanda Heng (Singapore). I found that, when examining these works against a model of directly reciprocal hospitality the works become more comprehensible. This perspective on hospitality was developed from my direct interactions with some of these artists and their cultural backgrounds. It was supported by research into The Practical Ethics of Hospitality and particularly my considering more codified forms of hospitality where the obligations of both the host and guest are known.³⁹ The important factor in these forms of hospitality for this project is an implicit understanding that there is a directly reciprocal exchange taking place between the host and guest. Starting from this point of view this kind of art-work becomes exercises in manipulating reciprocity using the outcomes of hospitality.

I tested this theory of constructing works by manipulating hospitality using studio works that demanded of participants some direct return for the gift they were given. For

37 John S. Drummond, and Markus Themessl-Huber. "The cyclical process of action research: The contribution of Gilles Deleuze." *Action Research* 5 (2007): 430-448.

38 Brad Haseman, "Rupture and Recognition: Identifying the Performative Research Paradigm," 152.

39 Al-Ghazali, *On the Manners Related to Eating* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2000).

example in *Grill-a Soup* participants were given a bowl of soup, in exchange they had a slightly uncomfortable decision to make regarding what to do with the bowl when they had finished. They had the choice of either smashing the bowl or taking it home. The aim of this research was to determine how much engagement or investment of time, emotion and energy could be expected from participants in return for the hospitality offered to them. This experiment was successful, particularly in developing the practical tools for conceptualising and planning future works. The development of methods using this insight can be seen in the increasing competency and complexity of the studio works. The most important of the tools developed is the method of considering various levels of participation and constructing specific reciprocal outcomes for each of them.

Further reading into theories of hospitality led to the anthropological area of gifts and Gift Exchange.⁴⁰ My research did not uncover significant works that examined participatory art within these theoretical frameworks. This was surprising as gift exchange and reciprocity are such rich and diverse fields in the social sciences. This gap in the literature appeared as an area I could usefully contribute to. Consequently the last phase of theoretical research applied some frameworks of indirect reciprocity to participatory art using my own studio works as examples. The framework was created by Jan Tullberg and divides indirect reciprocity into individual and societal outcomes to describe possible returns for engagement. By applying this framework, I was able to develop a method that addresses the research goals into participants' engagement and investment in participation.

This final application of a theoretical framework to the practice-led research has closed the gap between the functional practical understandings that are useful for the production of work and an approach suited for the examination of other participatory art events. It effectively integrates the two streams of research that operated during the project.

This experimental methodology developed out of my needs for the academic frame of reference in which I am operating. It was informed by my pre-existing practice methodology that I have built up over nearly two decades of art making. In the two sections that follow, I will outline some of the factors that contributed to my personal position and led me to design the project with these particular ways of communicating research outcomes in mind. Providing a background of my artistic position here allows the detailed discussion of each art-work to specifically deal with how I addressed the research questions in each event in Chapter, Two, Three and Four.

40 Largely based on the work of Marcel Mauss, David Cheal and Claude Levi-Strauss.

The evolution of the ethics and mechanics of my practice and this project

Central to my practice is producing work designed to engage an audience with a defined and considered expenditure of resources. A necessary first step for doing this is to identify who I am making the work for and what they might be interested in. This method and belief around the production and value of art-works developed in my photographic practice in the early 1990s. Making exhibition works and commissions for clients, both individuals and institutions, taught me about the economies of effort in communicating to a target audience. It also highlighted the expectations and responsibilities inherent in exchanging goods (photography or research) for money.

My concerns about research outcomes that are communicable to those directly participating in the events, and those accessing them through the academic written system, was informed by my portraiture practice. I observed that my institutional and individual clients were looking for different things in the portraits. Of great importance to me as a practitioner is to provide value to all participants. For instance, I consider the participants in my work as I would an individual commissioning a family portrait. Most participants are not concerned with the larger research project. Instead they are interested in a satisfying experience of an art-work in the moment of interaction. When reviewing the experience (or photograph), their personal remembrance of the event will provide the lens to make it memorable to them. It is this individualised vision that allows for the symbolic data of the practice-led research to be comprehensible to the participants.

I liken my sense of obligation to academic research as similar to my relationship with an institutional photography client. It seems to me that both are interested in how the research (or photograph) might be used by third parties in the future. To do this the research has to be comprehensible without direct experience of the events. It is to satisfy my sense of obligation to academic research that I developed the stream of practice that is best communicated with what Haseman terms symbolic words.

In part, I address the needs of direct participants by including an element of potential reciprocity in exchange for their support into the events. I hope that the audience can see the offer of food as a recompense for their engagement, both directly in the work and via their somewhat distanced support of my graduate scholarship. Some of these elements were made explicit to interested audience members throughout the project.

The needs of ethical standards within the university meant it was necessary when questioned for me to fully disclose that these events were research and the scope of the project (see Appendix C for a full set of forms and information sheets). Over the course of the project I developed a script to explain the larger project and participants' involvement. It provides a limited explanation consistent with my concerns outlined

above with giving the participants a directly engaging and interesting experience of the art-work. In the context of this document it should be considered as one of the objects I crafted to engage participants in a particular way and not as an explanation of the project.

I am doing a PhD in participatory art. This is part of my research. I am interested in how participatory art works, why people choose to participate and, when they do, why they do so, and, what they get from it. I am funded to undertake this research through the generosity of a government scholarship, which means in part your tax dollars are paying me to stand here making bread (or some other activity). One of the reasons I am doing the research in this way is so I can give back to the community that supports me, in a simple and concrete way. Perhaps my research will contribute in some way academically in the future but here and now I am happy that I can offer you something in exchange for your support and participation.

A variation of this script with follow up questions and answers normally satisfied the participants, it provided an explanation of the methodology of the project and their role in it as I wished to present it to them, emphasising the possibility for them to have a claim of ownership by accentuating the link between my funding and their taxes.

This method of making work allowed me to functionalise my research interests into value and reciprocity in my art making practice. In the public events that are part of the project this efficiency is achieved by stacking multiple layers of interaction and research into a single event. Consideration was put into the costing of these events and the amount of work they entailed. An attempt was made to limit the amount of time and money to approximately what would be expended on producing a photographic exhibition. This sort of event was chosen as a base line as I understood it from previous practice. It provided not only possible levels of economic commitment but also some guidelines as to what engagement might be expected from audiences. These concerns continue consistently through the project informing choices about the formal arrangement of the events.

CHAPTER 2

**MAKING WORK AND FINDING QUESTIONS
WHILE CLARIFYING ASPECTS OF RELATIONAL
AESTHETICS.**

The first round of research events

This first body of studio research allowed me to produce a number of events that clarified concepts encountered in my theoretical research. That the reading and studio research was happening concurrently was an important aspect of the method. As questions developed from the events and reading, they could influence the intentions, ideas and organisation of the next event. This model of having definite questions that were developed and tested in the course of a research event has remained central to the methodology throughout the project. Events are presented chronologically to best show the development of themes and issues. All of the research works are discrete experiments that build on each other. Each event is presented with a short explanation of the concepts I am exploring followed by description of the formal procedure of the work ending with a section of observations. Some concepts attached to the “Outcomes” are not dealt with again immediately but surface again later in the series. By the end of this series of research works I was in a position to explore strategies concerning the use of exchange and reciprocity in participatory art.

Baked Boiled Fried – 4 April 2008

This work was an immediate and visceral way to consider elements of the food works of Rirkrit Tiravanija. At this point in the project I was not concerned with testing the full range of content that Tiravanija includes in his work. What was important was to see how applicable the mechanisms of engagement using food were to my research.

The work aimed to provide research outcomes to some of the most basic questions that had arisen out of reviewing Tiravanija’s works and readings into Relational Aesthetics including: are events like this considered art by participants if not supported by or performed within an institution? How do people react to the use of food in participatory art? Which parts of the event are art and which are clearly logistical support? Why does the documentation of some of Tiravanija’s works consist of piles of dirty dishes in galleries? And, how is the artist considered by participants and a wider audience?

Considering my experience of interacting with Tiravanija and reviewing his work the placement of the artist within the work became an important site for consideration. Tiravanija maintains that his works are collaborative in nature and speaks about un-authoring himself.⁴¹ This is supported by my direct interaction with him in Singapore where the master-classes were run in an open and equitable way. However in the public presentation of work it was clear that we, as his collaborators, were perceived as supporting subsidiary roles. This left me with questions about perceived authorship

41 Jacquelynn Baas, *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

from the various participatory positions of the audience.

This observed placement of the artist central to the art-work is also at odds with the idea put forwards by Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* concerning the democratic and open nature of the micro-communities (or micro-utopias) he purports are created in the course of this kind of art-work. This event gave me an opportunity to be the centre of the event and many of the interactions that took place. This provided a unique perspective on participants' expectations of the artist.

Another question to which I did not expect a direct answer in this work (due to its duration) was the common practice of leaving the detritus of a cooking event in a gallery after an event for the duration of the exhibition. This is a practice that Tiravanija uses heavily in his cooking works. In the gallery setting it is perhaps mobilised to occupy space and memorialise and objectify the process. To me it has resonances to Daniel Spoerri's *Picture Traps*. These works often consist of dinner remnants stuck to the table top used and hung as canvases. The intention of these works was to "Trap one square meter of the world."⁴² The choice of Spoerri to use food as the "one square meter" seemed worth examining to me. I hoped that this research using food would inform my own practice regarding the continued display of the detritus surrounding eating.

Procedure

Set within the framework of a Canberra house party being held by a recent ANU School of Art graduate, the site provided a place outside the gallery institution but still within the wider community of people who regularly interact with art. This provided a middle ground between a gallery and a true public space where the identification of art is contested. The choice of a low-risk domestic space for this first work was based on two areas of concern. Firstly, the need to develop logistical expertise with the medium of food. Secondly, the comfort of having an audience that would be likely to agree that something was art because I told them it was. I was not confident enough in my cooking ability to work while fielding questions as to the nature of the work. These proved to be a reasonably supportive audience, participants being drawn from the fields of visual arts, theatre arts and general Canberra young urban professionals. In the course of peoples' discussions with me both the theatricality of what I was doing and the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija came up in conversation.

42 Eddy Devolder, "Daniel Spoerri: Entretien," *Artefactum* 9(45) (1992): 21. from J. Hatch, "On the Various Trappings of Daniel Spoerri," *Artmargins online* March 2003 http://www.artmargins.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=259:on-the-various-trappings-of-daniel-spoerri&catid=11:articles&Itemid=68 (accessed 2/2/2012).

Guests were asked to bring an ingredient which would be baked, boiled or fried then distributed to the crowd to eat. This simple linking of title with activity informed the potential participants what they might expect. Participants were photographed on arrival with their offerings which were then centrally pooled and used by me to generate plates of food that were passed around among the guests. The event ran well with participants bringing a range of ingredients. Some of the factors they said informed their choices were if the food was: easy to cook, home grown, designed to make my life difficult.

The bringing of food, talking about food, passing food and eating food was the designed limit of participants interaction within the event. There was no attempt by participants to take a more active role in the preparation of food (though any would have been welcome) or in other ways establish a greater sense of ownership of the art-work. Formal elements of design that may have contributed to this were: the way the cooking area was laid out, my choice of menu and my choice of costume.

The lasting documentation of the work was intended to be photographic, consisting of the photographs of participants with their food as well as action images of me cooking. In addition to this documentation the Tyvek suit I wore to cook in has become another document of the event.

Outcomes

The most important observation made from this work at a purely logistical level was that my infrastructure was capable of providing food for fifty people and that I enjoyed the process. These, while basic, are important outcomes. If either of these conditions had not been met the research would have developed in a different way.

There is a tendency for participants to focus on the gastronomic and culinary nature of the experience if food is provided in bountiful and tasty ways. Different options on how to use food were trialled in the following two works. *Paddle Pop Love Letter* (2008) used food completely symbolically while *Birthday Cookup* (2008) focused on presentation of the food. A question that came from this observation became one of the major challenges in the making of food based participatory art. How do you incorporate conceptual content while still feeding people well? The answer to this question is developed over most of the experiments.

This kind of work can be removed from the controlled environment of the gallery. Participants' interest was held and they engaged for an extended period of time while still being part of a convivial domestic setting. A continuing question from this was how adaptable is event based participatory art in regards to the setting and the audience. Developing this area can be seen in the progression to more and more public venues with other activities going on at the same time over the course of the project.

Participants appear happy for the artist to be a recognisable as prime instigator of the event, holding a privileged position that gives a level of authority. Undoubtedly the participants' make a democratic choice to engage in the work. However the community created is not democratic in character being shaped by the intent of the artist towards their conceptual goals. In this experiment I did not attempt to influence participants actions however this is the direction the project progressed in. By using the audience in this way I believe the community built could not be described as either democratic or utopic as Bourriard maintains in *Relational Aesthetics*.

Unexpectedly what became clearest to me from this research was the reasoning behind leaving detritus in galleries. Firstly, there is a feeling of achievement, having created a successful micro-community by cooking. The left-over detritus serves as a clear witness of the achievement in a way that the documentary photographs cannot. This to me is akin to the feeling of satisfaction of producing a good piece of art-work out of traditional materials. This artistic or emotional satisfaction differs slightly but importantly for a second reason, the commemoration or memorialisation of labour effectively objectifies the event/art-work and make it available in the gallery context. In that context how a secondary audience views the detritus is of interest. It is open to a range of reactions that importantly include possibility of the audience taking offence. Creating an overt negative reaction is not of interest to this project.



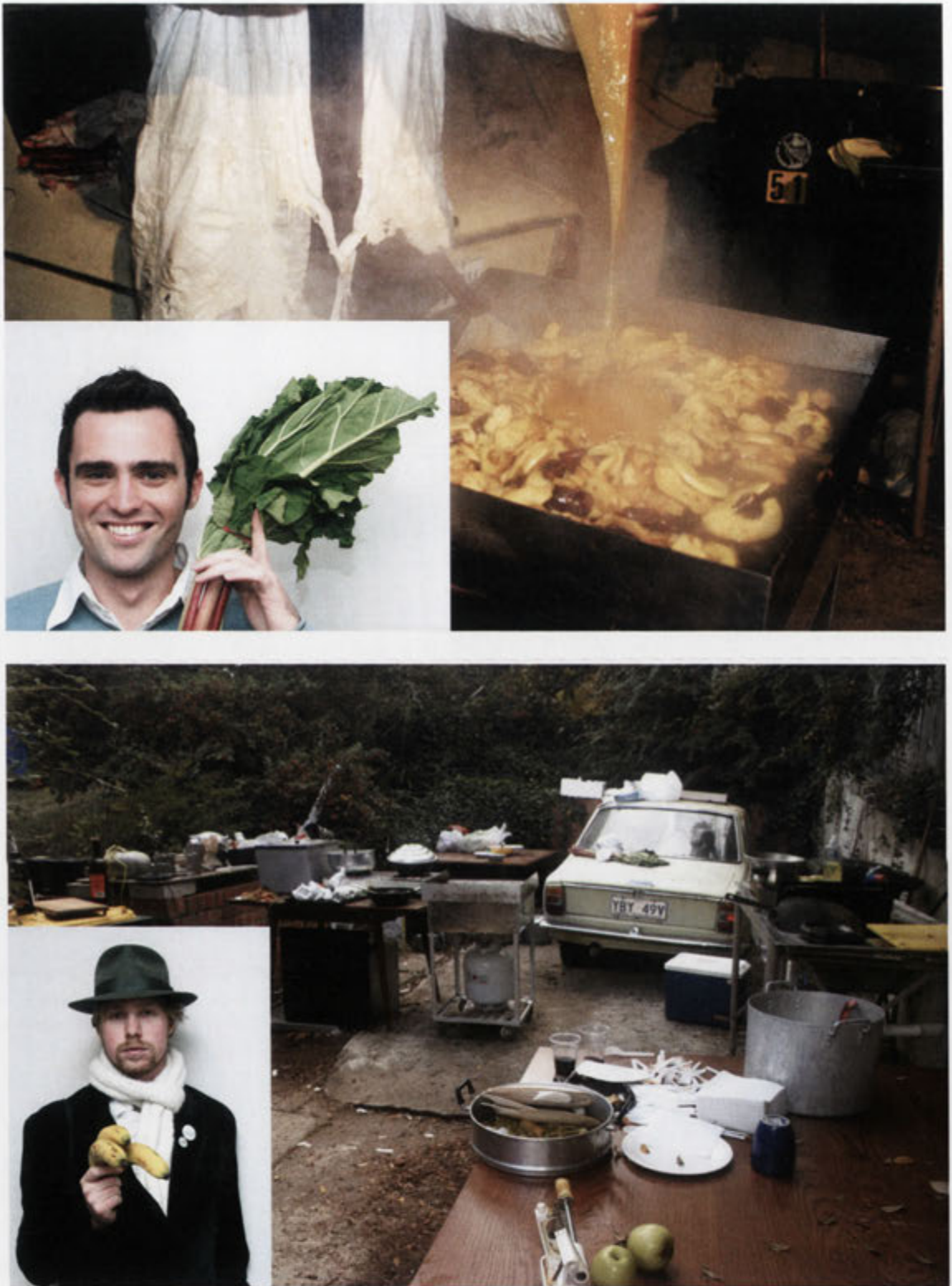


Figure 1.

Documentation of *Baked Boiled Fried*, 5/4/2008

Image within image format prepared for an artist's talk to show what participants brought and the setting of the event.

Photographer: Asher Floyd

Paddle Pop Love Letter – 12 April 2008.

The symbolic as opposed to actual value of food was a research area central in this work. This is informed by my interest in the ritual use of food (as in the Catholic Mass) and the use of food as emotional support. To me this has resonances to Mella Jaarsma's *Pribumi Pribumi* cooking work of 1998⁴³ where she elevated the cooking and consumption of frog legs above the concrete concerns of food. In a time of tensions against ethnic Chinese in Indonesia she (and a group of other Europeans) set up and cooked frog legs on a busy thoroughfare in Yogyakarta. Under Islamic food regulations frogs are *haram* (ritually unclean) and not to be eaten. However they are available in Indonesia as a dish identified with the Chinese minority. Why I consider it a particularly strong symbolic use of food is because even if no one had partaken in the frogs' legs, they were still representing a presence of Chinese on the streets.

The connection between food and emotional states is a topic that surfaces in a wide range of areas. In discussion with a dietitian she contributed that an important part of what she does is encourage people to separate their needs for food from their emotional needs.⁴⁴ In her practice this is done with rituals and rules that encourage people to slow down and appreciate the food. An example she used was always putting food on a plate and sitting at a table to eat. This is similar to my observation that it is very difficult to include any conceptual content while feeding people. While later in the project I do find ways of integrating concept and food, at this point I tried a different approach.

This work completely removed the eat-ability of food from the work in an attempt to deal with the tendency of participants to primarily consider their appetites while engaged in the work. The range of meanings food can carry for people (as discussed by Jaarsma in *Pribumi Pribumi*) meant the selection of a suitable audience was again a consideration. To simplify this, the piece had an intended audience of one. As such it could utilise a range of private symbols in its construction. In particular the chocolate Paddle Pop ice-cream is identified by the recipient as her food of choice when dealing with emotional situations.

Procedure

In this work I divorced the utility of ice cream from the visual signs and emotive content of chocolate Paddle Pops as a comfort food for the audience. A personal letter was written and crafted into the shape of a chocolate Paddle Pop then delivered by post.

Consistent with the single individual audience the text of the letter was extremely personal and the manufacture of the object was quite involved. Using a large format flatbed printer a strip of custom paper was printed to simulate the colour of chocolate Paddle Pops. On the reverse of this the text of the letter was printed as a single line of

43 Mella Jaarsma, *Pribumi Pribumi*, Marlioboro Street, Yogyakarta, 3/7/1998.

44 Conversation with Linda Smillie, 22/1/2011.

text. This was then wrapped around a second-hand Paddle Pop stick, sealed within a chocolate Paddle Pop wrapper and sent to the recipient.

The factors that I considered in the shaping of the participants engagement with the work was based around the experience of eating an ice cream on a stick. The wrapper looks and feels authentic; on opening the object smells right due to my use of a used stick and traces left purposely on the wrapper; most importantly the way of consuming the emotional text in a continuous strip that reduces the size of (and ultimately destroys) the original object is, I believe similar to the physical act of eating a ice-cream.

Outcomes

The importance of this work only became apparent in retrospect. It is the limit of my research into the use of food as solely symbolic, divorced from the reality of eating. From this work I came to the conclusion that in my practice food is best used when used to feed participants. If removed from that context of utility there is no particular reason to use it as symbol. It becomes equivalent to any other object that the audience has value in.

This observation is based on this work showing that relationships with food outside the consumption of it are deeply personal. This is in comparison to the previous work which demonstrated participants willingness to share in discussion concerning food and the act of eating. On reflection I decided that the diversity of my potential audience's symbolic frameworks meant that any points that they had in common were too limited to base works on. I could find nothing as clear as Jaarsma's mobilisation of a *haram* food that I could apply. I have maintained this as a guideline for my practice, always being careful of potential symbolic references in the choice of food used.



Figure 2.
Documentation of *Paddle Pop Love Letter*, 12/4/2008
Image shows three drafts and the final object inside the paddle pop wrapper
Photographer: Robert Guth

Birthday Cook Up – 12 April 2008

From the two previous works and reading the reviews of Tiravanija's food, works it became apparent that there is a blurring of understanding between works that use food as a medium in an art-work and the culinary or gastronomic arts. Chefs are often labelled in the media as "creative" and "artistic." To consider this fetishisation and aestheticisation of food a focus for this next work was on the formal aesthetics of the food presented.

The content, staging and audience of *Birthday Cook Up* gave me an opportunity to develop my persona as a performative cook referencing the mainstream media's characterisation of chefs as potential celebrities. This meant that instead of presenting myself solely as an artist I interacted with the participants as a cook, allowing me to observe differences in how I was considered. The combination of concerns about the appearance of the meal and this use of a persona were attempts by me to blur the line of the event between dinner and an art-work. In doing this I presented a meal that was both performative and participatory.

After the wholly symbolic use of food as an object in *Paddle Pop Love Letter* and the completely utilitarian use of food in *Baked Boiled Fried*, this next work examined food that was edible and also carried a symbolic meaning. The use of symbolism when broadening the demographic of the audience concerned me. To explore this area I chose a dish that I knew would generate a diverse set of reactions in my audience.

When speaking to people I have encountered a wide range of responses as to the eating of kangaroo. These range from disgust at eating the Australian national symbol to kangaroo being touted as a replacement for the farming of sheep and cattle and the "best" meat to eat on environmental and health grounds. I believed that the audiences' differing opinions on the consumption of kangaroo would provide a prime source of interaction in the work. Of interest was the emotional tone of these discussions. How invested the participants became in the exchange about the menu was one of the observations planned in this experiment.

In formal presentation, this work was aesthetically informed by my readings into the still life schools of larder and gamebag paintings. These forms that were used to commemorate wealth and status⁴⁵ acted as a framework for the production of this piece. The straight-forward and graphic description of dead animals are at odds with our current separation between meat and where it comes from as is the general air of bountifulness that is depicted in this kind of painting and current farming practices. In this case I relied on contrasting graphic food objects and the general plenitude of the meal with a suburban backyard to express these tensions.

45 Bendiner, Kenneth. *Food in Painting: From the Renaissance to the Present*. (London: Reaktion Books), 2004. And, Moore, Rosemary. *Food in Art*. (Hove, East Sussex: Wayland, 1995).

Procedure

Placed within the format of a Canberra house party this work is similar to *Baked, Boiled, Fried*. Participants were invited to a birthday dinner that they knew would be catered for. The food was presented as a buffet at a particular time, participants helped themselves to food. The participants were drawn mainly from the classically trained music community; and while smaller (ten to fifteen instead of thirty to forty) it is still a similar scale to *Baked, Boiled, Fried*.

Where this event differs, was the role of participants and conceptual placement of the food. Participants were informed that they did not need to bring food to contribute as plenty would be provided. This places the participant in a more clearly defined position of guest as opposed to collaborative party participant. Thus a straight-forward way for them to claim a sense of ownership through participation was removed. I reasoned that positioning the guests more as audience rather than insisting on participation would be more sympathetic to the presentation of food as object.

The choice of centre-piece (baby kangaroo) and its cooking method (roasted whole in salty dough) was aimed at creating a distinct dish that the participants would be able to engage with as an emotionally charged aesthetic object. This is not what happened, instead comments by participants at the time ignored any possible controversy about eating kangaroo, a baby or poached game and instead centred on recipes, tastes and other gastronomic subjects.

The participants' interaction with me was based around my persona as cook and artist. There was a general acceptance that what I was generating was a piece of performance art and that the outcomes were the food objects. It is possible that this identification of the work as a performance and not a participatory work was in part due to the performance backgrounds of a majority of the guests.

Outcomes

Even if the participants' consideration of this as a piece of performance art rather than as a participatory work was due to their own performance backgrounds, this work led me to consider the importance of these two categories to my practice. This was particularly in relation to the frameworks of interaction proposed in Relational Aesthetics where the art-work is created by democratic interactions of participants with the role of the artist being secondary or purposefully unresolved. In this work my observation was that participants are far more interesting than any food I can prepare. However for the audience to see the work in this participatory way, they need to be guided to it by structures or actions of the artist. Clearly manufacturing opportunities for participation became a key concern in designing these events.

This shift in focus from the generation of food objects to trying to shape the actions and interactions of participants in future works has been important to the project.

It acknowledges the findings from *Paddle Pop Love Letter* that food objects, while interesting, cannot provide the conceptual anchors needed for my practice. This was supported by the participants' lack-lustre reactions to the food that was offered. As can be seen from the documentation, I was not subtle about presenting a whole kangaroo carcass. To be any more direct would have been crude and possibly offensive. Similarly taking this work to a more sensitive audience would end up being merely sensational and not consistent with my conceptual intent of generating discussion while not being overtly offensive. From their reaction it was clear to me that the value of food as medium of engagement is far more satisfactory than food as object.





Figure 3.
Documentation of *Birthday Cookup*, 26/4/2008
Images show the stages of cooking the whole kangaroo, general setting of the event and behaviour of guests
Photographer: Robert Guth

Cooking for the well fed – 26 April 2008

One of the underlying features of my experiences of hospitality within my family (and outside) while in Singapore was the emphasis on the action, not the material goods being offered. The other very important factor is that hospitality is a socially reciprocal contract with expectations on both sides. Marcel Mauss's foundational text in the field *The Gift*⁴⁶ describes these exchanges in tribal communities, and mapping gift economies (the term itself suggests exchange) is a technique found in anthropology.⁴⁷ At the time of making this work an important text was Al-Gazaly *On the Manners Related to Eating*⁴⁸ a sixteenth century text which outlines the rights and obligations of the host and the guest under Islamic tradition.

In this work I made the contractual nature of exchange more explicit. Participants were asked to do something after they had received some food. In simplifying what can be a complex web of reciprocity involved in the offer of hospitality, I hoped to make it possible for participants to see their involvement as an exchange. It was hoped that this would give them a greater sense of involvement and ownership of the event.

The mechanics of how I chose to communicate this to participants was based around my continuing research into two areas of stagecraft that were established in *Baked Boiled Fried* and continued throughout. Firstly I was interested in how to include some conceptual content in works using food and secondly, how to document these work.

Due to the layout of the venue and progression of the event this work was presented in two stages. This allowed for a staggered disclosure to the participants as to the nature of the art-work they were engaged in. This structure meant that I could ask something of the audience, not tell them what it was for and then afterwards let them know. This continues to address the concerns about the placement of the artist in participatory work. In this case the focus was on how to treat participants with respect without them having pre-knowledge of the action about to take place.

This question is informed by watching the discomfort of participants in Danielle Freakley's *The Quote Generator*.⁴⁹ In that work Freakley only spoke in cited quotes while in public. This led to interactions with unknowing participants that left them

46 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, (London: Cohen & West, 1969; original French edition 1923). Mauss says gifts are "... in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested". This sums up how gifts function for the purposes of this project.

47 David Cheal, *The Gift Economy* (London: Routledge, 1988).

48 Al-Ghazali, *On the Manners Related to Eating* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2000).

49 P. Trotter, "Mirroring our Dialogue: Danielle Freakley as 'The Quote Generator'," *Artlink* 27(4) (2007) <http://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3038/mirroring-our-dialogue-danielle-freakley-as-the-qu/> (accessed 2/2/2012).

concerned for the mental health of the artist (who they never knew to be performing) and in some cases worried about their own safety. As a privileged participant knowing what was taking place this interaction appeared harmless and even funny to me. However it did make me conscious that in my own practice I did not want to use participants unkindly. This work starts to formalise my concerns in the area.

As a variation on how to place myself in these events I excluded myself from direct contact with most of the participants during the first part of the event. Instead a structure of volunteer helpers from the crowd was trialled. In the second part of the event I clearly identified myself as the author of the work and thanked my helpers. This proved to be a very successful way of moderating between being central as I was in *Baked Boiled Fried and Birthday Cookup* and completely absenting myself from the work. A similar format was used in the staging of *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* (2009) which allowed the Mongolian helpers who did some of the cooking to be strongly identified and appreciated by the wider audience.

Procedure

Set within a *Pecha Kucha*⁵⁰ evening held in a bar I cooked tempura and had volunteers distribute it through the crowd (of about a hundred and twenty people) collecting information generated during the act of eating the food. The volunteers were largely people who were in some way connected with the ANU School of Art. Participants were asked to use the dipping sauces on one side of the plate if they owed money or the other side if they were debt free. This was the first stage of the art-work.

Due to the format of Pecha Kucha I was later able to take the floor and reinforce the actions of the work by giving a presentation about it and my whole research project. I started by asking by a show of hands if people thought they had just participated in an art-work. The resounding response to this was negative with only three people raising their hands. This provided a platform for me to explain what I was trying to achieve in the project. Without this clear identification of my action as an art-work I believe that it would not have been recognised as such.

However given this second element of explanation, participants were able to engage and value the work. When ABC local television did a news story on Pecha Kucha⁵¹ six months later an attendee they interviewed at a subsequent edition, mentioned my event: “An artist handed out plates of fried food and asked about if we owed money.” In this context it was clearly identified as an art-work.

50 Pecha Kucha (which is Japanese for the sound of conversation) is its patented democratic system. Each presenter is allowed 20 images, each shown for 20 seconds - giving 6 minutes 40 seconds of fame before the next presenter. http://www.pechakuchacanberra.com/page_id=2 (accessed 23/1/2012).

51 Transcript: <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/act/content/2006/s2370617.htm> (accessed 2/2/2012).

Outcomes

The work clearly showed that, in exchange for the offer of hospitality (food) a reciprocal action (giving anonymous personal information) can be solicited from participants. This is particularly exciting as it provides a place in the work for communicating conceptual content. This simple exchange became one of the focuses of research from this point on. In the next work *Grill-a Soup*, it was again mobilised in the same way of asking for action after being offered food. In that case the length of time between eating and asking was longer.

For me or for others present the plates smeared with the remains of sauce are a meaningful record of the event. However for a wider audience they require secondary documentation in the form of text or photographs to make them intelligible. I continue to explore this creation of objects that act as documentation or reminders of the event for participants in the next work *Grill-a Soup*. This is further developed in the *Art-Is-An Bread* (2012) presentation at Canberra Contemporary Art Space where photographs and objects are combined in an attempt to make paired objects that contain enough content that they are understandable to those not present at the initial event.

The most useful findings from this event relate to structuring interactions of participants within the work. From the patterns of interaction that developed in this work I was able to structure the following three categories of participants. These have been useful in the planning of future works, particularly those that have relied on collaborative help, like *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* (2010).

Primary participants engage with the artist and the work for an extended period of time. This group has a greater understanding of the goals of the work. In this case, the people who carried the trays of tempura around and directed where people should dip before eating would be the primary participants.

Secondary participants are those who are involved in a limited and proscribed way. This group would be considered the audience in participatory art. Works are generally constructed to focus on them. They have a limited view of the work being wholly inside its constraints. In this case all the people who were offered food fall inside this category.

The wider circle of people who view documentation or hear about the event afterwards are tertiary participants. Being wholly external to the participatory aspects of the work, these people have to rely on documentation and artifacts to build their opinion of the work.





Figure 4.

Documentation of *Cooking for the Well Fed*, 10/5/2008

Images show me preparing vegetable tempura on the street, participants distributing and eating the food, me presenting my *Pecha Kucha* talk and a tray showing the dipping patterns of participants.

Photographers: Michell Lim and last image Robert Guth

Grill-a Soup – 25 May 2008

The opportunity to present this work was seen as a chance to test if my logistical skills had matured. It was important for me to know I could produce a work that engaged participants with the skills I had been developing. As such, this work does not relate strongly to exploring detailed theoretical questions. Rather it is the conclusion to a cycle of research.

Experiments up to this point were very concerned with finding the place of food in my practice. While this continues in subsequent research, this event no longer tries to overburden food with conceptual content, instead using it simply as a means of engagement. When I return to this symbolic use of food later in *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* the intervening research has developed my understanding of audiences more.

While the inclusion of concepts around exchange and the economy were started in *Cooking for the Well Fed*, it is this work that really set up the area that is then fully explored at the end of the project. Combining the making, performance, objects and food to communicate to participants the content about value was the aim of research in this event. As with *Cooking for the Well Fed*, the main interaction with the participants was asking them a direct question with a concrete answer expected of them. Unlike that event, the question is linked to a durable object, not an action. Observing the difference in participants' reactions to this small change had important effects that influenced later research.

Focusing on the objects not the action is a element that this event has in common with the main *Art-Is-An Bread* events. A number of other elements were introduced in this event: While preparing I was aware of the amount of time and money expended and how that could affect the conceptual content of the work beyond the type of food used. The audience was invited to extend their engagement with the work past the boundaries of the event and into their homes. In doing that they were forced to consider what a particular object is worth to them.

Procedure

Guerrilla Gigs are based on the same concept as Flash Mobs. It is known that one is going to take place but location is only publicized via SMS and Internet a few hours before it starts. They are community events of 50 to 100 people who gather in a public place to listen to music provided by musicians known to the community. The demographic of participants is generally community conscious, Canberra inner north dwelling, recyclers who care about the state of the world. For this event, the attendance of a "Griller Chef" was highlighted.

During the musical performances I stood to the side of the stage area dressed in my

“cooking suit” (a Tyvek coverall) preparing and dispatching vegetable tempura into the crowd. This served to familiarise the audience with my presence and place me at a similar status as the performers. It was also part of an ongoing process of the time to build recognition in the community of me as a performative chef with a signature dish of vegetable tempura. The offering of nibbles was also the audience’s first act of direct engagement with my food. It was given without asking anything directly in return, so served to soften them up for the next part of the work.

At the conclusion of the musical performances, I served the audience soup from recycled bowls purchased at below the cost of plasticware. On finishing, I informed them that the disposal of the plates was their responsibility, as from my point of view they had been an excellent alternative to plastic. I suggested the options that they could take them home or smash them (in the pot provided) and I would use them to stabilise erosion on my farm.

This caused a moment of dilemma for the participants as they had to choose between “wasting” a bowl (by smashing it) or adding it to their already overfull collections of “stuff” in their own domestic space. It was exactly this moment of consideration about the value of an object that I was trying to create.

The response of participants was varied. Some happily smashed bowls; others took theirs home; a few declared that this was an unacceptable waste and that if it allowable by me they would take home a larger number (see last image in figure 5). This action was welcomed by the large majority of participants who did neither of the first two options, instead abandoning their bowls making them someone else’s problem.

Outcomes

As in *Birthday Cookup* the audience was happy to identify me as a performance or performing artist and to consider the work as a performance piece. This continues the discussion about participation and performance that had re-occurred throughout the project. I did not start with this as a question, but it became important as the events progressed. In this event it was only by my openly declaring the need for participation to deal with the bowls that it became a participatory art-work to the audience. Till then it was considered a performance work that included the distribution of free food. After this experiment events generally became much more obviously participatory in form. This division in the reaction of the audience/participants is a field of possible future research, for example an interesting question could be how to integrate participation into traditional performance modes, or into community theatre.

The use of an object that is immediately recognisable (a bowl) plays an important part of the accessibility of the work to those who are not present at the event. This is the group I have termed tertiary participants in the previous work (those that experience the work second hand). This use of a common household object answered some of

my earlier concerns about the specificity of symbols. This has even allowed for cross cultural readings of this work when the documentation was presented in Mongolia. This demonstrates to me that if the meanings are simple enough and carefully considered there is a place for the inclusion of objects that have specific references. The use of bread in subsequent events is informed by this finding.

The idea of value that was introduced as content of this work proved to be an interesting area that was developed over the rest of the project. Particularly of interest was the balance of importance put on money as opposed to my time. Participants repeatedly asked if they could contribute money to the production of the work to “help pay for food,” not one participant in all of the works to date has offered some restitution or acknowledgement of the amount of time it takes to prepare these works. To give some idea of the relative expenditures; the budget for feeding the hundred people involved was less than one hundred and fifty dollars (including the crockery and spoons) but it took me three and a half days of full time preparation and cooking to make the work. This informs the choices of what is made explicit in future events, where I make a point of exhibiting the cheapness of materials and machinery and the amount of labour that I have to contribute to the process.

The creation of temporary community was not considered in the design of the work. When the unforeseen solution to the bowl disposal problem emerged with individuals coming forward and offering to take large numbers of bowls home, this created a new dynamic that removed me from the exchange. This is the closest I got to producing the democratic and convivial exchange that is central to the ideals of Relational Aesthetics. However to achieve this unity of participants it was necessary for me to be cast as an adversary. They worked together to thwart my apparent bowl wasting actions.

The most basic of research outcomes should not be overlooked in this case. Using the skills I was developing, the work was a success. A number of participants did take bowls home. Some did get smashed in the pot and most importantly participants understood the concept of the work and willingly engaged in the process as I outlined it to them.





Figure 5.

Documentation of *Grill-a Soup*, 25/5/2008

Images show general setting, my placement relative to the musicians, how the food was served and how participants collected plates to take away.

Photographers: Steven Guth



Figure 5.1

Documentation of *Grill-a Soup*, 25/5/2008

Smashed and Taken

An experimental way of showing the two outcomes for participants from the event.

Photographer: Robert Guth

Guidelines for future works developed from the research (April-May 2008)

While many of the research outcomes were integrated into my practice and can be seen developing in each work there were also some concrete guidelines developed at the end of this cycle of research that relate to future events within the project and the rest of my practice generally.

These are important as they operationalise the research areas concerning the inclusion of content, communicating to audiences and the place of food in practice.

Works will discuss or examine something other than the place of food in art; even if it is only a simple didactic message – for example value, use and wastage in *Grill-a Soup*.

During the course of an event something aesthetically interesting would be made – documentation would aim at communicating the conceptual content of the works. For example, the trays or photographs of trays from *Cooking for the well fed*.

Food will not be used purely symbolically (as in *Paddle Pop Love Letter*.) Food will continue to be used to feed people and where possible feed them well.

It is necessary to direct participants' attention to what is important. It is only by directing participants' engagement to aspects of the ongoing event that conceptual content is made clear. Conversely, according to Relational Aesthetics, one of the goals of this kind of participatory work is to create democratic convivial exchanges between participants, divorcing the artist from the exchange.

By the completion of this body of works I felt that I had a grasp on how to use food to create and shape engagement during the course of a participatory art event. Later food work (*Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb*) was a chance to refine my method for the particular constraints of a gallery space.

CHAPTER 3

**FURTHER RESEARCH: DEFINING AN
AUDIENCE, THREE RESEARCH EVENTS IN
ART-SCHOOLS**

The three works in this section examine different modes of engagement with the audience. While all of them still relate to the wider concerns of applying Relational Aesthetics they each have a very particular focus: *Mongolian Kangaroo Skin* (2009) mobilises serial engagement of participants over the course of time linked with one object; *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* (2009) centres on watching rather than eating food and *Baking in the Gallery* (2010) operates on the aesthetic of Relational Aesthetics inside the gallery.

These experiments are in response to the first round of research and continue the discussion of how the theory of Relational Aesthetics could be applied to my practice. From the earlier experiments I was satisfied that outside the gallery structure presenting a work without further conceptual content than it being “Relational” was not acceptable. This body of work provided the opportunity to test how Relational Aesthetics might be accepted in a contemporary institutional setting or gallery.

This body also developed an understanding of possible uses of the forms of cultural theory in art-work. Concepts included were simple, for example in *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* concerns about the nature of stereotyping and authenticity were included. This integration of anthropological theory reached its conclusion in the main *Art-Is-An Bread* events where the items swapped for bread were exhibited as a collective representation of the value of bread to particular groups of participants.

This round of research was informed by my visit to Mongolia in early 2009 as part of the Open Academy program.⁵² For a one month I stayed in Ulaanbaatar, teaching at the Central Art Academy and running workshops for artists through the Blue Sun artists’ collective. While there I made a range of art-works and engaged in research associated with this project.

The research carried out in Mongolia, as well as testing the universality of Relational Art, provided more opportunities to experiment with the representation of the artist. Due to representing myself as an exotic figure: Australian, Asian, Singaporean, performance artist, academic and photographer. I was able to make observations in relation to the perceived value of the exotic within the contemporary art framework. The power of both materials (kangaroo skin) and actions in character (wearing Batik and sarong (see fig 6.1)) to contextualise activities and add an artistic value to the experience of the audience led to the research event *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* based on introducing “authentic Mongolians” as primary participants into the School of Art Gallery.

The event *Baking in the Gallery* simplified conceptual content down to the extreme to see if the form was enough to carry a work that was convincing to the audience when

52 Open Academy, <http://ifima.net/IFIMA/OA/OA.htm> (accessed 2/2/2012).

placed within this setting. At this event the audience became their own objects of study as they observed each other and the loaves that they made. This is the experiment closest to the form used by Tirvanija in *Untitled 1992 (free)* that has been a touchstone throughout my doctoral project.

***Mongolian Kangaroo Skin* – 8-30 March 2009**

The possibility of carrying out research in Mongolia provided an opportunity to consider cross cultural production of participatory art. This allowed the development of several areas of research pertaining to participants' perceptions of the offer of engagement and the place of the artist. It also forced me to consider how an audience in Australia might interpret the documentation or artefacts from the work.

The participants in the work, both those directly involved in the actions and those reviewing the documentation in Australia, were largely made up of members of the arts community. To make the work intelligible to these audiences I looked for materials consistent within these sub-cultures that also resonates within the wider cultures of both places – possibly in different ways. Joseph Beuys is widely known in both art communities, and his use of materials in ritualistic ways (particularly animal hair in the form of felt) served me as a bridge between the both arts cultures. In the place of felt I chose to use a kangaroo skin, as I thought it still carried some of Beuys' shamanistic overtones whilst also being more exotic in the Mongolian context. I chose to utilise a method of taking something that might be considered valuable or at least exotic and then use it as the raw materials for constructing a work. This is similar to Mella Jaarsma's *Witnessing silence* (2003)⁵³ presented at the Canberra Contemporary Art Space. It was three cloaks that completely cover the model made out of different materials associated with culinary and herbal practices of Southeast Asia.

Mongolian Kangaroo Skin continues the development of non-food exchanges in my practice. In this case I tried to make a work that added continuity to my interactions with people while in Mongolia that could also be representative of the whole experience in one object on my return. It was the process of continually giving from a single object to build a sense of connectedness and community between the participants and the participants and myself that was a particular interest in this work.

Procedure

I offered participants the opportunity to cut a piece out of the whole kangaroo skin to keep for themselves with scissors I provided. Their instructions were that they could not cut from the edge or extend someone else's piece. That I wanted each hole to be distinct so I could remember them all individually. On my return to Australia the now perforated skin acts as a souvenir and documentation of the work. In the skins modified form it

53 Mella Jaarsma, *Witnessing silence*, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, 2003.

suggested the various exchanges that have taken place between the participants, with me and between Australia and Mongolia.

The selection of material was based on my understanding of the place of leather and furs within Mongolian culture. They are used for utility, beauty and also for shamanistic practices concerned with investment of spirit or “energy.” What I was unaware of was how deeply ingrained the exchange of small tokens upon meeting is in Mongolian culture. Between men this is traditionally done with snuff. Bottles are exchanged, sampled and then returned to their original owners. In this sampling process of course a small amount stays with the other party.

Outcomes

I found that participants were more able to map their own conceptual content onto the work than I had expected. This was not only the finding of this experiment, it was supported by the reception of the documentation from *Grill-a-Soup*. Traditionally in Mongolia bowls are a precious personal item that people carry with them on their belts and used when sharing food or drink together. Viewed from his starting point *Grill-a-Soup* could have become not about wastage and the relative value of objects and space, but rather about the acceptance or rejection of gifts and hospitality. Both of these observations gave me confidence in the ability for such works to travel geographically and still meet expectations of participants.

I was satisfied that the use of a single object over a work of longer duration was able to create continuity. The additive nature of the work was enjoyed by participants; that they were taking a small piece for themselves as well as contributing to a larger work was particularly effective. As it travelled with me and was seen repeatedly, some participants viewed it on multiple occasions and could re-engage with the work by observing its progress.

The sense of exchange that was created by the participants taking a piece of skin and leaving an imprint on an object that was recognised as being one of the permanent artistic outcomes of the process was far more engaging and democratic than if I had just given pieces of skin away. This is still not a truly democratic exchange as it was structured by me and included guidelines about how to cut out their portion.





Figure 6.

Documentation of *Mongolian Kangaroo*, 8-30/3/2009

Images show participants engaged in cutting out pieces of skin, a class from the art academy holding their pieces up, three pieces on a desk that I signed and me explaining the project as part of an artist's talk to the Blue Sun artists collective.

Photographer: Dalkha



Figure 6.1

Image shows a performance made in the main square of Ulaanbaatar. I am dressed in reference to my Southeast Asian heritage eating an ice-cream.

Photographer: Dalkha

Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb – 5 September 2009.

This was the first opportunity for me to work within a gallery setting during this project. It gave me the perfect chance to re-visit questions about the place of objects in the documentation of participatory art. It takes up this thread from *Baked Boiled Fried* and uses the gallery to develop those findings in a new setting. In this case detritus was not left in the gallery solely as a document of a participatory work that took place on opening night. It was also constructed and placed in such a way as to communicate the simple didactic message of difference that was built in to this work.

My exoticness and the interest that it created was a factor in the success of my works in Mongolia. *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* was an opportunity to observe the inverse relationship of making a work that had Mongolians as primary participants in Australia. I hoped that this would provide ideas for future development on the use of ethnicity as a form of interest in participatory works.

With its more performative structure this work allowed for a consideration of how to engage primary participants in different ways as part of the art making process. By placing others in primary host roles, I was able to position myself differently to other works. In the works to date I have taken the roles of cook (*Baked Boiled Fried*), monologist (*Cooking for the well fed*) and performer (*Grill-a-Soup*). Here I primarily acted as producer and director making sure that the logistics allowed my participants to act and providing them with direction as to what I wanted them to do.

Procedure

This piece compares the common Australian perceptions of Mongolia with a more complex living representation. The mechanism for doing this is a comparison of what is commonly called Mongolian Lamb in Australian Chinese restaurants (in this case prepared by me) to a traditional Mongolian hotpot prepared by Mongolians.

For the participatory event on opening night we cooked one and a half lambs in total; approximately one lamb as Mongolian hotpot and the rest stir-fried Australian Mongolian lamb fashion. My Mongolian participants acted as hosts, cooking and serving the hotpot while the Australian Mongolian Lamb was self-serve from a food warmer.

My two main volunteers were graduate students at the ANU and part of the ANU Mongolian Student Society. At all society events that I attended these two always took leading roles in the preparation of the hotpot. In addition around fifteen other Mongolian students, partners and children attended to take part by eating and talking to other participants. A few members of the Mongolian embassy staff also attended as from their perspective it was seen as a cultural outreach event.

The large vessel used for making the hotpot and the food warmer were left in the gallery for the duration of the exhibition. These and the associated traces of the cooking and serving processes acted to continue the discussion even though the food (and most of the scraps) had been removed. What did remain was the lamb bones and stones that had been heated then used to cook the meal.

Outcomes

I had hoped that the performative aspect of this work including people working and the way the food was served might have helped to communicate conceptual content about difference to the secondary participants. Instead as with all of the works involving the distribution and eating of food as a part of the participatory action, this work reinforced the difficulty of separating participatory audiences from their bellies. To date all verbal feedback I have received has been commenting on the food as food, and not on the overall event as a piece of participatory art.

The use of detritus does work particularly well in a gallery setting. Crudely put the basic premise that if it is in a gallery, it must be art favours this sort of presentation. In this case the success of the placement of artefacts from the *Mongolian Mongolian - Australian Mongolian Lamb* in relation to each other continued to communicate the conceptual content about cultural difference. Through my display I aimed to suggest a more active and engaged use of detritus than when used just as evidence of a social event as in the case of some of Tiravanija's works that are labelled as relational.

The exoticness of the Mongolian participants' and the secondary participants familiarity with me meant that the primary participants (the Mongolians) were the centre of attention. I did not need to participate in the theatrical presentation of the work instead being able to concentrate on the logistical infrastructure. This can be seen in the video when I awkwardly come forward to invite people to eat (see included DVD). This action was a mistake and disturbed the narrative of the work. This is an important finding and conforms with systems used in Participatory Action Research. This is an area that be developed further when working with groups that are identified as being different from the larger audience.





Figure 7.

Documentation of *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* 5/9/2009

Images show participants engaged in preparing and eating Mongolian hotpot a dish similar to a hangi or umu in that the cooking is done with rocks that are heated over a fire then combined in a confined space with the food.

Photographer: Robert Guth

Baking in the Gallery – 4 June 2010.

The primary goal of this event was to test in one of my own works the possibility of applying aspects of relational aesthetics directly in the gallery. This is as close as I could come to making a work that I believe fulfils the criteria of Bourriaud's Relational Art. To do this I made the interactions between participants as democratic as possible. Unlike other events there was no attempt at communicating conceptual or didactic content in the exchanges taking place. Making a work like this not only develops possible uses for Relational Aesthetics in my own practice, it also enables observation of the audience's acceptance of the theory.

To fully engage in the work participants had to both get their hands covered with flour and dough and wait for a significant period of time. This shared activity and extended involvement were key to the social structures of open interaction being encouraged.

Procedure

Presented as part of an evening of events in the ANU School of Art Gallery, this was the smallest and simplest event carried out in a gallery. Under thirty kilograms of dough was used with a total of approximately forty loaves being made.

The dough used was chosen for its easy handling and fast rising recovery characteristics. This was keeping in mind the wide range of possible abilities of the participants in handling dough and the range of shapes they might want to make. According to "bakers percentages"⁵⁴ the dough was made with white bakers flour (100%), industrial yeast (1%), salt (1.5%) oil (2%) and water (60%). This produced dough similar to what is used in pizza or Turkish bread, though it was a little easier to handle as it has less water and more oil.

On arrival the audience were offered a five hundred gram portion of dough and directed to a table set up with working area and a range of spices, seeds and herbs they could add as toppings. The range of loaves created were wide ranging with no particular theme emerging overall.

The prepared loaves were then placed by me into the proofing box for around ten minutes to give the dough a chance to recover from its shaping and the yeast time for a final rise. This also allowed me to accumulate loaves for batch baking as controlling oven temperature was an unexpected problem. An unexpected secondary outcome was that this allowed participants to interact with each other as they watched their shaped loaves lose definition as they rose.

54 "In using baker's percentage, each ingredient in a formula is expressed as a percentage of the flour weight, and the flour weight is always expressed as 100%." <http://www.kingarthurflour.com/professional/bakers-percentage.html> (accessed 5/2/2012).

The bread was then baked at approximately 210 degrees centigrade for fifteen to twenty minutes in a gas-fired, fan forced convection oven with stone shelves added to increase thermal mass. The oven was mounted in the back of a ute positioned just outside the back door of the gallery. When the bread was removed from the oven it was displayed on cooling racks till it participants were able to claim their loaves.

An important part of the participatory dynamic between participants was their sharing of their loaves of bread. This was encouraged by my not baking any loaves to distribute as nibbles. This was planned as an opportunity for micro-communities to develop in the course of the event. Since most of the participants were part of the same art community, it was hard to judge if any new social interactions took place. To me this suggests that micro-communities were not formed. Rather individual interactions that conform to various forms of reciprocal exchange within a community took place.

Outcomes

Most participants felt it was a successful art-work. It did not concern them that there was no conceptual content beyond an exhibition of Relational Aesthetics. This finally satisfied me that the acceptance of Relational Art in art teaching institutions was sufficient to base works on.

The prospect of getting their hands covered with flour and dough was not a major barrier to participants. Nor was their relative inexperience in shaping loaves of bread. This is not a finding that I would be willing to extrapolate to other audiences as this group was clearly inclined towards material manipulation.





Figure 8.

Documentation of *Bread in the Gallery*, 4/6/2010

Images show some of the layout of the space as well as participants engaged in shaping and decorating loaves of bread and some of the finished loaves.

Photographer: Steven Guth

Summary of these works

This body of studio research brought anthropological interests, aesthetic and conceptual content closer together. In doing this it solidified a direction for the rest of the project. In conjunction with my reading into anthropology and direct observations of the art community, I came to an important realisation about the project through these works. I found that this research was not only primarily of interest to my peers in the arts community, it was also about them. Up to this point I had been performing the research in a range of sites partially outside the arts community. These works while geographically spread (Mongolia and Canberra) and performed with culturally diverse participants (Mongolian graduate finance students) were a homecoming for my practice, in that it was returning to the arts community.

Based on the participants' convivial interactions and their declarations of the work being successful, I satisfied myself that within the controlled setting of the institution/gallery presenting a work as Relational is sometimes adequate. It is noteworthy that this seems true of audiences in such geographically diverse places as Ulaanbaatar and Canberra.

I could arrive at this conclusion in part because of consideration of the three levels of participation developed in *Cooking for the Well Fed*, that were applied to the planning and execution of these events. In the case of these three experiments the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of participants were all part of an art-informed, or at least art-interested public. This allowed a more open and generous exchange between participants and participants and myself.

On reviewing these works once sensitised to an anthropological perspective I came to see how these events (and the whole project) could be considered Participatory Action Research (PAR).

There are many definitions of PAR but they all relate to the term "*Action Research*," developed by Kurt Lewin in 1948 – Lewin maintained that there were two basic ideal outcomes to action research. "generating knowledge and changing social systems".⁵⁵ While I accept that the concepts participants are exposed to in the course of this research are not likely to be "*changing social systems*" in large and immediate ways it does remain my hope that in some way people are changed for the better by participating.

PAR is normally used in the context of community development to empower either poor or dispossessed groups in very particular ways. It has been by used widely in parts of Asia towards land reform⁵⁶ and in range of developed countries with minorities.⁵⁷ In all

55 John Drummond and Markus Themessl-Huber, "The cyclical process of action research: The contribution of Gilles Deleuze," *Action Research* 5 (2007): 432.

56 Anisur Rahman, *People's self development: perspectives on participatory action research; a journey through experience*, London: Zed Books (1993).

57 Susie Veroff, "Participatory Art Research: Transcending Barriers and Creating Knowledge and Connection with Young Inuit Adults," *American Behavioural*

these cases “changing social systems” not “generating knowledge” has apparently been the primary focus. This is a significant way in which this project differs from what is classically considered PAR. The other large difference is in the nature of the relationship between the participants and myself. In none of those cases listed are the researchers and the participants lives as intertwined as my involvement with the art world.

Due to the socially activist role that PAR is normally cast in, researchers commonly come from outside the social situation they are working in. This leads to what Anisur Rahman terms “two research streams” due to the social gap between the researchers and as he puts it, the “underprivileged masses with whom they work”.⁵⁸ This gap is seen as a failing in this form of research and attempts have consistently been made to integrate the findings of the external researchers and the communities they work with.⁵⁹ In applying the PAR framework to this research into participatory art, this gap is closed as educationally and socially the researcher (me) and the audience are operating from the same position. The audience is fully capable of understanding and appreciate the research outcomes of the project.

In addition to sharing the goals of other PAR research projects the methodology that I have developed fits well within the cyclic research strategy formulated by Lewin in 1948. I will here quote him at length from Drummond and Themessl-Huber as their editing of his original text suits my methods of art making and research well.

Planning starts usually with something like a general idea. For one reason or another it seems desirable to reach a certain objective. Exactly how to circumscribe this objective and how to reach it, is frequently not too clear. The first step then is to examine the idea carefully in the light of the means available. Frequently more fact-finding about the situation is required. If this first period of planning is successful, two items emerge: namely, a ‘overall plan’ of how to reach the objective and secondly, a decision in regard to the first step of action. Usually this planning has also somewhat modified the original idea.

The next period is devoted to executing the first step of the overall plan... this second step is followed by certain fact-finding... This reconnaissance or fact-finding has four functions. First it should evaluate the action. It shows whether what has been achieved is above or below expectations. Secondly, it gives the planners a chance to learn, that is, to gather new general insight. Thirdly, this fact-finding should serve as a basis for correctly planning the next step. Finally, it serves as a basis for modifying the ‘overall plan’...

This is a reasonable description of the methodology that I am using in this research. My method is definitely cyclic with research events providing me with the opportunity to “gather new general insight” that inform the subsequent works. This system can be clearly observed in the in the *Art-Is-An Bread* events.

Scientist 45,(2002) 1273-1286.

58 Anisur Rahman, *People’s self development: perspectives on participatory action research; a journey through experience*, 91.

59 Bibi Holge-Hazelton and Tulinus Holge-Hazelton, “When the spiral of action research collapses: Using the arts to interpret and continue the process in collective research dialogues.” *Action Research* 9 (2011), 42-64.

CHAPTER 4

**FINAL RESEARCH: PLEASING PARTICIPANTS
WITH RECIPROCATION**

Art-Is-An Bread

The final year of my practice-led research consisted of four editions of the Art-Is-An Bread event. Formally similar to most of the previous works this event consisted of an opportunity for participants to engage in activities involving food. The basic action consisted of participants exchanging goods of their choice for a loaf of bread that was baked by me. Over the four editions of the event in excess of six hundred loaves of bread were exchanged for objects. The details of each of these editions can be found in the narrative description section of this chapter.

As well as being a larger than any of the preceding events, Art-Is-An Bread was also a far more considered and complex piece of research. It more closely integrated participants' actions with concerns about value and exchange as well as with the research questions about methods of communication. It did this in part by considering the participants using the framework comprising of three levels developed earlier in the project.

Due to the multiple editions and consideration invested in several conceptual elements, this experiment grew to the extent that the format I had devised for writing about the earlier research work failed in communicating it clearly. This has led to a different format for writing about this final body of research. The largest difference is that the focus of outcomes is on exploring the reciprocal relationships that are core to my frameworks of interaction. This is done in part at the end of this chapter and the indirect reciprocal relationships are expanded in the next chapter with the frameworks of reciprocity developed by Jan Tullberg.

Materials

Equipment

Due to the event being restaged a number of times I had to develop a system that could move and be installed in a range of settings without any special requirements. At the same time I had to incorporate the capacity to produce at least one hundred and fifty loaves of bread a day. Though I tried to have the minimum amount of equipment it was still necessary for me to accumulate a significant amount of specialist equipment. To make it easier for participants to identify with the experiment, where possible, lines of similarity between the equipment I was using and the domestic equivalents were drawn. The gas oven resembled a large domestic and items such as bowls, knives, sieves, the scale and measuring cups were all normal household items. In addition the list of

equipment included: a thirty litre spiral mixer, cooling rack, work bench, proofing box and assorted trays, boxes, bowls, scrapers and knives. Most importantly, the main work bench was at the height of a domestic table instead of a standard kitchen bench. This facilitated more open exchanges as it caused less of a barrier between the participants and actions taking place.

The machinery was either bought second hand from online auction houses and eBay or in one case manufactured. This was partially to do with affordability (the whole set-up cost less than \$1000) and contributed to the commentary on worth and value in the work. To make this more obvious the auction house tags were left on equipment and I incorporated telling people how much it had cost when appropriate. In the case of the proofing box, after buying a commercial unit I made the decision instead to build a rustic version out of plywood that resembles a transport case as used for art-works. While this meant smaller capacity and reduced bench space it considerably lent a D.I.Y. aesthetic to the installation. The small industrial 30 litre spiral mixer could not be significantly modified, all that was done was placing it on a cut down supermarket trolley. The intent of mobilising these aesthetic strategies was to present the event's ongoing process as accessible to participants as possible. At no time was the equipment considered as art objects, as in the case of some of Tiravaija's work. For example in *Untitled empty parenthesis* from 1989 he displayed dirty used ceramic cooking pots on plinths as part of the gallery installation and these were also offered for sale as works of art. More recently his *Untitled 2005 (flaming moning glori no.101)* consisted of a polished gas bottle, burner and wok packaged in a mirrored box.⁶⁰ Instead equipment was considered as tools of the artist.

At each of the editions a method to display the loaves of bread and exchanged goods had to be organised. This differed between each edition significantly as the display systems were provided by the venues. In every case an effort was made to present the loaves of bread in some equivalence to the items. The use of a commercial cooling rack was practical but also clearly defined the loaves as the finished products that were the focus of the object exchange. This focus on the food as objects differs significantly from the representation of food in Relational Aesthetics where it is seen as a means of creating convivial spaces and engagement between participants.

Duration

How to influence the length of time and quality of engagement was a major consideration. In this event I increased the duration of engagement to both before and after the actual physical interaction with the event. Before the event this was achieved

60 Tiravaija, R. *Untitled empty parenthesis* (1989) Unnamed group show (New York City 1989) and Tiravaija, R. *Untitled 2005 (flaming moning glori no.101)* (site unknown 2005)

by the simple mechanism of asking participants to bring something with them. This differs from standard advertising in that participants were asked to think about value in reference to their own surroundings and not money. Once these objects were exchanged for the loaf of bread the engagement continued at least until the loaf had been consumed.

Bread

The choice of bread for this project was due to the low cost of production, possibility of performative making and its place in contemporary culture. The wide range of prices that a loaf of bread can be bought for was an important element to the work. A loaf of bread can range in cost from \$2 to \$7 a loaf. This was repeatedly pointed out to possible participants as a clear indicator that a range of values were acceptable and they should feel free to offer what they felt appropriate.

The use of sourdough bread made in an “artisan” style was discussed also in terms of cultural significance of the material. “Sourdough” like “organic” has no legal definition in Australia⁶¹ but has come to be recognised as free formed (as opposed to tin formed) loaves that have been made with slow acting yeasts that are live cultured rather than fast acting industrially bred yeasts. These yeasts give the bread a distinctive sour taste. Sourdough bread is associated with ideals of craft, alternative lifestyles and health. Recently large chain bakeries have started producing bread and calling it “sourdough” to gain a marketing advantage.⁶² This internal questioning about what “sourdough” is, assisted me to open the conversation around the value of bread and keep it focused on participants’ actual experience and use of bread.

I wanted to avoid excessive ethical and philosophical discussions about bread, particularly its biblical and historical symbolism. These considerations about the possible perceptions of bread are informed by how other artists have used food in gallery situations. I was particularly informed by similar nuances of domesticity, affordability and exoticness that I observe in the following artists works: Amanda Heng’s use of bean sprouts in *Let’s Chat*,⁶³ Mathew Ngui’s work for Documenta X that used Hokkien style spring rolls *You can order and eat delicious poh-piah*, (1997)⁶⁴ and of course Tiravanija’s repeated use of curry (most notably in reference to this project *Untitled 1992 (free)*), and his use of instant noodles and soups for the work that was

61 E. Wynen, *organic agriculture* <http://www.apf.gov.au/library/intguide/FAD/organic.htm> (accessed 3/2/2012).

62 John Doves, *Bakers Delight Sourdough and Helgas Bread*, sourdough.com <http://sourdough.com/blog/bakers-delight-sourdough-and-helgas-bread> (accessed 4/2/2012).

63 Heng, Amanda, *Lets Chat Substation* (Singapore 1996)

64 Ngui, Mathew, *You can order and eat delicious poh-piah*, Documenta X (Kassel 19-29/6/1997).

staged for the 1993⁶⁵ Venice Biennale. All of these foods are cheap in their native environments, but have an atmosphere of exoticness lent to them either by geographic translocation or (particularly in the case of Heng) placement into the gallery.

Pattern of Reciprocity

This was the first research work where the design included formal structures of reciprocity from the start. The aim was to make a work that considered specific exchanges between particular participants. The framework used to define these groups was the three level system that I developed earlier in the project. Galleries or host organisations were considered primary; people who engage with the work by swapping objects for bread were secondary and tertiary participants are participants in the final showing at Canberra Contemporary Art Space. I had specific exchanges in mind for each of these groups, between them, me and each other. The following section outlines these in the participant categories of primary, secondary and tertiary.

Primary Participants (hosts)

The most important factor in making the research work repeatable was finding places to mount the events. It was always the intent to mount multiple editions of this research work in venues that were both socially and geographically diverse. Using the three tiered model of participation hosts were identified as a group of primary participants and were considered accordingly. Aspects of the event targeted at the interests of the hosts were: Recognisability, content, and competence. These have been aligned with primary participants because being identified with these elements is the main exchange I offer them for participating in the project. In return the secondary participants and to some extent tertiary participants give credit to the host for supporting the work. This is explained under the “Generous Reputation” section in the next chapter.

Secondary Participants (people who swap “stuff” for bread)

Secondary participants directly engage with the physicality of the work, they access the conceptual content though being present and taking part. This group is normally considered the audience and conventionally, art-works are mainly targeted at them. In this event the activities and objects are offered to them to encourage participation and, once engaged, to extend it in terms of both length and complexity. Photography is of particular importance to this process. By taking a photograph of the participants with their object and their loaf of bread it is used to add another element to the exchange. In this way it also addresses the question raised in the early research about participants contributing to the documentation of the events.

65 Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled 1993 (1271)*, Aperto 93, 43rd Venice Biennale, (Venice 1993)

Tertiary Participants

The final display at Canberra Contemporary Art Space is the main point of engagement planned for these participants. Due to the nature of the event these participants have overlapping of roles. While being tertiary participants of the overall project they also act as secondary participants in this particular event. The conceptualisation of this event is discussed at length in the conclusion.

Elements of Participation

The following section of this chapter outlines some of the direct elements considered to engage the audience. In most cases these can also be considered as the content of the work. The more complex implicit and indirect forms of reciprocity are expanded in the next chapter. These are dealt with using Tullberg's framework of indirect reciprocity.

Recognisability

The recognition of the event as Performance or Participatory Art was one of the mechanisms of increasing the recognition and comprehension of the activity as art. In the editions where I was baking on site the durational performative aspect of my actions was consistently emphasised. This meant that by supporting this work the public would see the host as being supportive of art. This is a tradable commodity for a gallery, discussed in the Generous Reputation section in the next chapter.

Ethical appeal

The conceptual content of the events was based around my continuing engagement with value and exchange as topics for my practice. In this case these were partly framed with concerns about food security and consumption. This was identified as an area that would be of interest to both primary and secondary participants on the basis of the experience gained in the other events. Thoughts about this specific area were in part informed by my discussions with food activists involved in the Slow Food movement.⁶⁶ The larger concern of food activism was considered in three categories, education, localness and health benefits. All of these were seen as attractive for both primary and secondary participants to be involved with.

Competence

While it is often the goal of artists to appear competent, the scale of my use of food made it particularly important. Primary participants had to feel confident that I could successfully produce the large amounts of bread in their venue. Secondary participants had to have faith in my ability to produce food safely and not make them sick.

66 Particularly Dr. Shannon Dillion, and Joy Miller, both members of the Canberra Slow Food Convivium, <http://slowfoodcanberra.com/> (accessed 2/2/2012).

Photography

Photography was designed to play a number of roles in this research event. At the same time as documenting the exchange of items for bread, the act of being photographed was one of the major points for engagement that participants had with the project. The act of taking the participants' photograph was planned to be the climax of my interaction with them. It would come after all of the logistics of the exchange and paperwork of participation had been dealt with.

By including the photographic act as central to the exchange the photograph became far more than just a recording of what went on. The act of standing in front of the camera and signing a release form (see Appendix C collection of forms and information sheets) became clearly a reciprocal transaction. Framing the photography in this way is also a solution to the question concerning what should constitute documentation of these kinds of art-works.

In all of the pre-publicity to the events I made no mention of participants having their photograph taken. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, in accordance with following an anthropological methodology, I did not want to influence participants about what to exchange for bread. Secondly, experience as a photographer suggests to me that any mention of having a photograph taken is a deterrent to gaining co-operation from the public. This decision was further supported by many participants refusing to be photographed until they knew that their head was going to be out of frame. Thirdly, it was an effort to disconnect the photography from the main exchange of "stuff" for bread. In doing this I hoped that it might be considered as part of the exchange connected to participating in the event as an art-work or research.

I felt justified in not informing possible participants as at no time were they under any obligation to have their photographs taken. However over the course of the events only two people declined to be photographed. One was an un-accompanied minor so no dialogue was entered into. I believe the other participant understood fully the nature of what was being asked as they considered my request and responded with "Oh no, I don't think that is part of the deal," which indicates an understanding of the limits of the exchange that they were willing to enter into.

The photographs were planned to be used as a key part of the final presentation at Canberra Contemporary Art Space. At that event they were paired with the "stuff" swapped and together presented as a object of value.

Exchange

Throughout this work I maintained to the participants that the content of the work was about exchange and value. In particular I was using the example of what people were willing to swap for a loaf of bread as an example of the diversity of value in our society. This also provided the reason for photographing the objects and participants. Identifying

this as a worthwhile piece of research was informed by research into anthropological studies of gift exchange, particularly David Cheal's examination of gift economies in a urban Canadian community. The most relevant part of that study is the tabulation of classes of goods and their exchange paths that indicates equivalence reciprocal relations between various members of the community via third party gift exchanges.⁶⁷

While this internal study of exchange value was understood by most participants it did not fully satisfy all of them. Questions were common about what was the larger framework that the exchange of bread for objects was placed within. It was necessary to inform participants of the various reciprocal exchanges taking place. I said to them that, in addition to their trading of something for a loaf of bread, their act of participation was of value to me within the structure of the research.

The Art-Is-An Bread Events

The Front Café and Gallery Canberra 23-25 July 2010

A concern that became apparent as the event approached was attracting a sufficiently large audience. consequently more effort was put into marketing the event than any of the other editions. In addition to publicising the event via Facebook, hard copy flyers (see Appendix D) were produced and distributed in a limited way. In addition at my request a post was placed on the local, user-generated news site RiotAct (the-riotact.com) by a friend (see Appendix D a print out of the thread). Over the course of the events in Canberra The RiotACT became a regular site for discussion about the events. In all of these forms of advertising, efforts were made to leave open to participants what an acceptable exchange would be.

Procedure

The Front Café and Gallery is located in a suburban shopping centre in the Inner North of Canberra. It is owned and managed by a local sculptor (Paul Jamison) and has a reputation of being an "arts café." The way the front describes itself on their Facebook page is:

It is a place where art openings turn into all night parties fueled by live music, skipping ropes and bubble blowing... Of a night passing by you are liable to find yourself caught up in poetry slams, stand-up comedy, music of every possible genre, photography exhibitions, video installations, puppet shows, theatre both experimental and traditional.⁶⁸

It is a venue that has a loyal following of people who might think that it was a good idea to swap "stuff" for bread.

The room The Front provided me is normally used as an art gallery, mainly displaying

67 David Cheal, *The Gift Economy*. (London: Routledge, 1988), 87-206.

68 *The Front*, <https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/front.gallery/> (accessed 1/1/12).

works on the walls. For this event a glass shelf was installed along one long wall of the gallery for placing objects exchanged for bread on. I positioned the cooling rack near the entry door on the opposite wall. On entering the space participants saw the loaves of bread on their left, the baking equipment in the centre of the room and the objects that had been exchanged on their right. It was hoped that this layout would suggest to possible participants some sort of connection between the bread, activity and the assortment of objects being displayed in the room.

The general pattern of behaviour of people on entering the room was one of curiosity about the bread and objects. Depending on how busy I was and how many other people were in the room I would greet them and explain what was going on. Those that were already engaged with the work and had items along to exchange would then go through the standardised pattern of signing a release form, choosing a loaf of bread and being photographed. Participants that were previously unaware of the event taking place would then either go and find something to exchange, from their car, wallet, bag or go and purchase something from the surrounding shops, they also had the option of putting money in an “honesty jar” and taking a loaf of bread.

Over the three days the event took place approximately 350 loaves of bread were distributed to participants. Of these, slightly over 260 were exchanged for objects and approximately 80 were paid for using the honesty box system, in addition some were sliced up for eating onsite. It is interesting to note that the average amount of money contributed for a loaf of bread was between \$3.10-\$3.30.

The amount of time that people chose to engage with the work varied. Very few people who entered the business did not at least have a look at the event. Documentation shows that participants spent quite a long time engaged with the event, talking to me, and each other. From conversation with the proprietor Paul Jamison, it seemed that overall the amount of money spent was an increase from a normal weekend.

The event went surprisingly smoothly given that this was the first time I had presented an *Art-Is-An Bread* event. Ingredient handling was adequate even without a sink in direct proximity to the workspace. The use of the business cool-room for keeping dough overnight proved to be important. The inclusion of the use of a cool room became an important part of logistics for future editions. Of note was trouble with the weight and size of the oven which led to me breaking two fingers while transporting it back to storage. This accident led to more thought into the planning and set up for future events.





Figure 9.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, The Front Edition, 24-26/7/2010

Images show set up of mobile baking installation, participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place.

Photographers: first image Steven Guth others Robert Guth

Boorowa Agricultural Show 3-5 March 2011.

The underlying research in this edition relates to exploring how well the event could be translocated. Boorowa is about one hundred and twenty kilometres from Canberra and has a different social structure and demographic. Physically it was of interest to see how well the event could operate when not supported by the logistical backup of my studio and friends. Far more important was finding out if the event was conceptually robust enough to be successful in a small town in the wheat and sheep belt rather than the middle class leafy inner-north suburbs of Canberra.

Changes that were made for this setting were very slight. The press release (see appendix D) included a mention of what a loaf of similar bread might be worth in Sydney. The importance of the labour aspect was downplayed; everyone works hard in the country – hard work is not worth noting. And the country/city difference was noted as I thought it would be of interest to participants how they differed from people who live in Canberra.

Procedure

This edition was run in two venues over three days. For the first two days of the event it was in The Pantry on Pudman, a business in the main shopping area of Boorowa. The Pantry describes itself on Facebook as:

...a unique mix of delicious Bills Beans coffee, an eclectic range of home baked locally made sweets, scrumptious range of regional & national produce, fresh flowers by Native Botanical & an eccentric range of antiques & collectables.⁶⁹

For the last day it was relocated to the Pavilion Section of the Boorowa Show. The host for this edition was the Boorowa Show Society who had helped organise the use of the space in The Pantry on Pudman. The details of some of my negotiations with the Show Society are in the Reciprocal Reputation section of chapter six.

The interaction with secondary participants was very similar to that in The Front. Generally everything happened earlier in the day which is consistent with the activity patterns normally associated with country towns. The largest difference was that at The Pantry on Pudman more participants who had not previously heard of the event went away and came back with something to swap.

In total about 110 loaves were swapped for objects and around 25 were paid for with the honesty box. The average amount given for a loaf of bread was between \$4.30 and \$4.60.

69 *The Pantry on Pudman*, <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Pantry-On-Pudman/272322709460176?sk=info> (accessed 4/1/12).

The movement of all the equipment to the pavilion at the show grounds was facilitated by helpers provided by the show society. This logistical support was one of the things I requested from the start on the basis of my previous finger injury. Being mindful, if insistent of my needs for physical logistics was one of the ways I exhibited competence to the primary participants.

The interaction with secondary participants who exchanged objects for bread at the Show was not in essence different from either of the two previous venues. However there were many people who stopped and watched the process of baking as one of the exhibitions of the pavilion. Generally I engaged these participants verbally and explained the project to them. They would then tend to examine the previous exchanged objects more carefully before leaving. This was a good preparation for the Contested Landscape edition (Sydney (2011)) where this mode of engagement became more common.

As might be expected a large proportion of objects swapped were from stalls and displays present at the show. Approximately 50 loaves were exchanged for objects and 20 were paid for using the honesty box. Unfortunately a separate account for monies collected that day was not kept.





Figure 10.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, Boorowa Edition, 3-5/3/2011

Images show set up of mobile baking installation in *The Pantry on Pudman*, the collection of objects swapped for bread at the show and examples of exchanges.

Photographers: Robert Guth

You Are Here Festival, Canberra 12-19 March 2011

The significant research findings from this edition relate to the performative aspect of the work and the valuing of my labour by the audience. This work divorced the making of the bread from the swapping event. This allowed for me to judge how important the performative aspect of the work was to participants. Instead of being busy all the time tending to the needs of bread production I could present a persona that was more based in being an artist instead of a cook/artist. While this did not make a significant change to the pattern of interaction with participants, it allowed me to have more time to talk to participants and ask them about their involvement. These conversations did not lead to changes in either the objects exchanged or the participants' experience of the project. The dynamic of my being the creator of the project was maintained.

Procedure

I was invited to participate in the the *You Are Here* Festival on the basis of organisers' knowledge of the edition at The Front. The main activity of the festival was taking over an empty shopfront in the Canberra city bus interchange and hosting a series of participatory art-works, concerts and theatrical performances over seven days. *You Are Here* describes itself as:

*You Are Here gathers together groups and individuals from all artforms and creative communities, taking them out of the spaces they might normally inhabit and bringing them into the Canberra CBD. We program artists who are willing to experiment, explore new spaces and concepts, work with new audiences and in collaboration with people from different artforms and backgrounds.*⁷⁰

While the basic dynamic of swapping "stuff" for bread remained the same as the previous two editions the daily running of this event differed.⁷¹ Firstly the hours that I was able to operate were limited by the other needs of the space as a multi-use festival venue. This meant that as well as not being able to start early in the morning (nothing was allowed to happen before 11am), I also had to be packed up most afternoons by 4pm or 5pm. This limited the possible audience to people who inhabit the bus interchange during the middle of the day. This meant that I was not easily accessible to the commuters as they moved to and from home.

Every day for the seven days of the event I would arrive with forty eight loaves of bread I had baked that morning pre-packaged in paper bags and set them up on the display rack. The bread had to be pre-bagged for health regulation reasons. I signed them and hand labelled each bag "ART-IS-AN BREAD CIVIC EDITION" giving them an edition number out of three hundred and fifty. This was to emphasise the loaves as art objects by linking them to the convention of numbered multiple editions.

70 *You Are Here* <http://youareherecanberra.com.au/> (accessed 5/2/2012).

71 A full description I wrote of the baking procedure for the event is available at: <http://sourdough.com/forum/swapping-bread-stuff> (accessed 18/2/2012).

Participants' engagement with the event was not as influenced by the lack of live baking as I had expected. On two occasions participants asked me who was supplying the bread and were surprised when I told them I had baked it that morning. This was unexpected as I had always centralised my performative baking within the events and value that participants invested in engagement. This caused me to question the role of my labour to the experience of the Canberra city audience.

This work had an unexpectedly large number of tertiary participants who could access the exchanged objects by looking at them through the window. This option allowed for a very limited engagement that seemed to appeal to people.⁷² On several occasions I went outside and spoke with participants looking through the window to find out what they thought about the event. While this led to no important observations about the mechanisms of engagement it did reinforce the findings about needing clarity and obviousness in opportunities for participation in the design of events to maximise participants' interactions.

72 One such participant wrote on The RiotACT website: *I spent a good ten minutes at lunch time today analysing (through the window) what people had offered. There were some good things and some dodgy things far_north* The RiotACT, <http://the-riotact.com/bread-to-be-had-in-civic/40317AC> comment #10 16/3/2011 (accessed 9/2/2012).

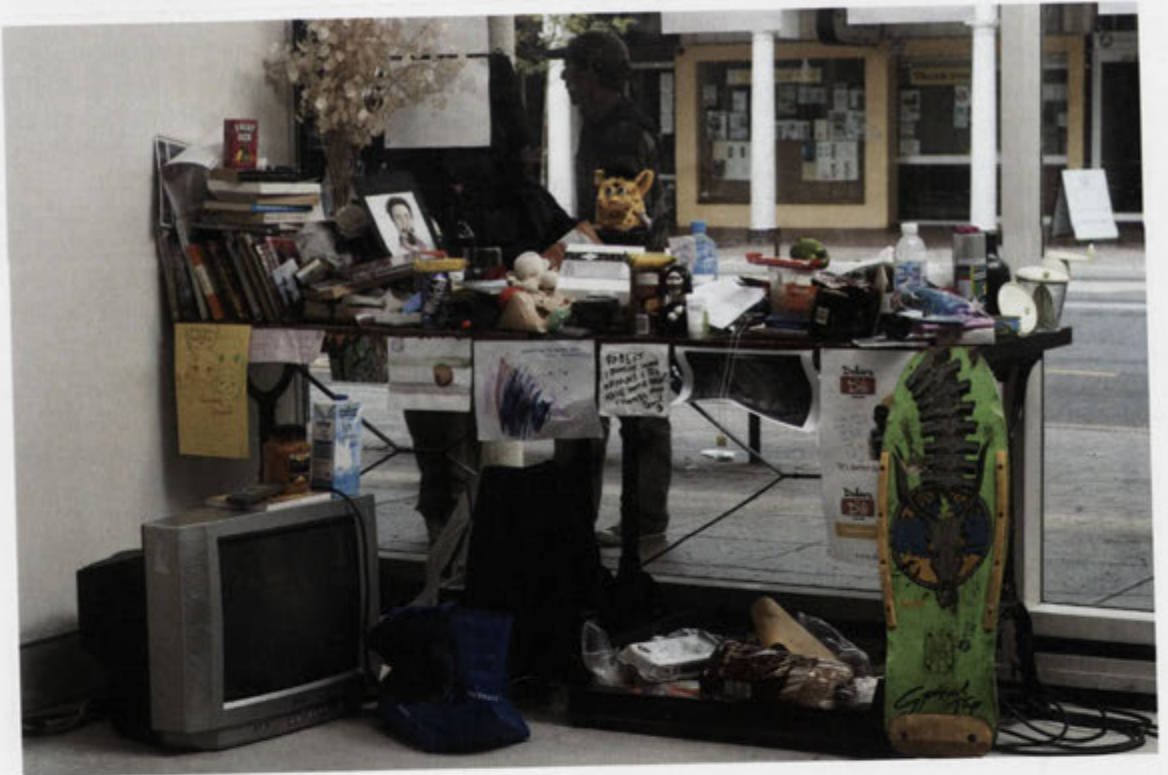
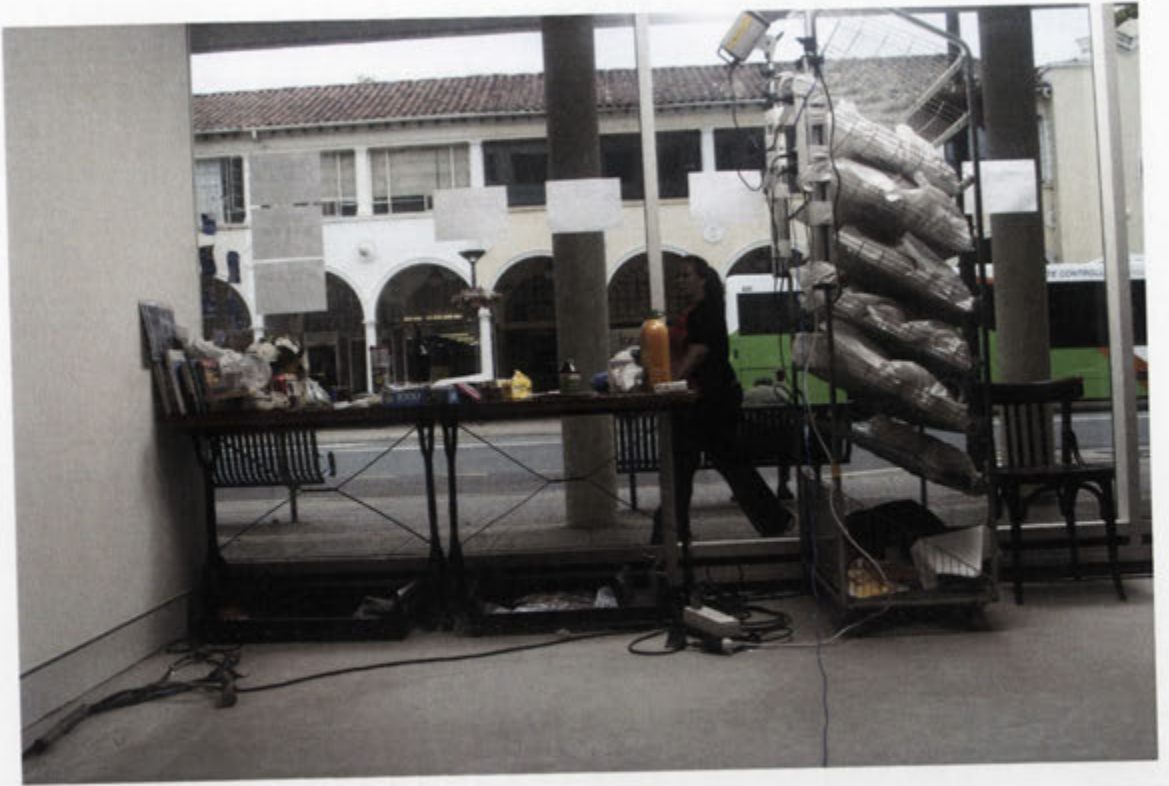




Figure 11.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread, You Are Here Edition*, 12-19/03/2011

Images show participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place, including the exchange of the song *Sourdough man* (used on the documentation DVD as background to the main menu).

Photographer: Robert Guth

Contested Landscapes, Sydney 23-25 September 2011

This edition again provided the opportunity to run the experiment in a different setting observing how a new environment influenced the dynamics of interaction. The only addition to the event was the use of an instant printer to output the photograph of the participant, together with the exchanged object and their loaf of bread. These prints were then combined with the swapped object and displayed for immediate sale. This was both a field trial of the method of presentation to be used at Canberra Contemporary Art Space and a development of the research relating to what participants can reasonably be asked to do in the course of a work.

The other area of research interest was an examination of the dynamic between the organisers and myself. This was the first edition where an artists' fee was part of the agreement for me to mount the event. This significantly changed the pattern of interaction between us. Essentially the *Art-Is-An Bread* event became a commodity. In this case the organiser's focus seemed to be on delivery of a defined product for the least possible outlay. On my part I tried to get the most money in return for the effort expended. This was a change from negotiations with previous editions that were based on the event having positive outcomes for both parties. Operationally this meant that there was less consultation between us about details and more of an assumption on both sides that the event would run, due to the commitment of money.

This was the most public event as it was held in a temporary structure on the forecourt of the old customs house in Circular Quay Sydney. While this was a good opportunity to exposure my practice to a large audience it also added considerably to the problems of mounting the work. These centred on the physical constraints of working in the public eye. without much space and the negotiations with the organisers.

Procedure

One of the organisers of *Contested Landscape* contacted me after becoming aware of my work while we were both students in the graduate program at the ANU. We were both attending a class where I brought in and gave away bread to all our fellow students. I suspect this show of competence and generosity combined with his viewing of documentation of earlier editions prompted his invitation.

Contested Landscapes is described in the *Art and About* program:

*IMAGINE a collaboration between art and science, with creative minds working together to tackle the complex contests for scarce land and resources facing our local communities... this unique exhibition showcases very individual artistic responses to the science informing current debates on topics such water, land usage, urban development, transport and food security.*⁷³

73 *Art and About*, <http://www.artandabout.com.au/projects/contested-landscapes-art-meets-science> (accessed 9/2/2012).

The concerns listed did not seem like a perfect fit for the content of *Art-Is-An Bread*, however the opportunity to run the experiment in a public place overcame my worries and we proceeded.

Once installed this edition was not significantly different to either the events run at The Front or in Boorowa. I would arrive early in the morning and start baking. Over the course of the day participants would come and interact with the work. The largest number of participants were people who happened to be passing through the space and saw something interesting going on. Given the locality at Circular Quay these were people passing through the forecourt between the ferries and the city. This led to a range of objects being exchanged that were opportunistic in the sense that they were what participants happened to be carrying at the time. A surprising outcome was that they did not go and buy objects from the many convenience stores in the area, this is a significant difference in behaviour from any of the other editions.

The strategy for displaying the objects exchanged evolved over the course of this edition. By the end of the event objects were sorted for display according to their visual appeal, interest, desirability of theft and commonness. This system was arrived at to limit pilferage and the exchange of objects like used ferry tickets. I developed this system for desirable objects after having two exchanges stolen, a pair of expensive multigrip pliers and a set of five postcards from the Museum of Contemporary Art shop. At one point a group of people started trading used ferry tickets which prompted me to remove these items from obvious display. It was interesting that participants based their behaviour on the evidence of previous trades rather than making their own choices about the value of a loaf of bread. By removing the tickets it encouraged participants to engage with the work as I had intended; providing them with a moment when they had to consider for themselves what a loaf of bread is worth.

Operationally this meant that the most desirable and least desirable objects were placed in a plastic crate next to the main display shelf. These were still evident as part of the event and contributed to the volume of objects exchanged but participants could not directly interact with them. I believe not having used ferry tickets on display did reduce the number of them swapped in total. Of course participants were still welcome to exchange tickets for bread but they did not have a visual cue that it was acceptable. This observation supports my strategy in publicity documents of leaving acceptable exchanges as open as possible.

The use of the honesty box was actively discouraged in this edition, it was only used as a last resort when participants had English as a second language and I could not communicate the whole concept of voluntary exchange of objects with them. As such it did not provide any useful data about perceived values of a loaf of bread. The alternative option of fully utilising the buying of objects and photographs as an art object as a way to get a loaf of bread was explained. A participant could exchange anything for a loaf of

bread, be photographed with it and then buy the object and photograph with a certificate stating that it was now an art-work produced by me for \$20. No participants engaged with this part of the work. This provided me with an outer limit of what can be expected of participants in that setting. It also informs my planned exhibition strategy for the final showing of these objects and photographs.



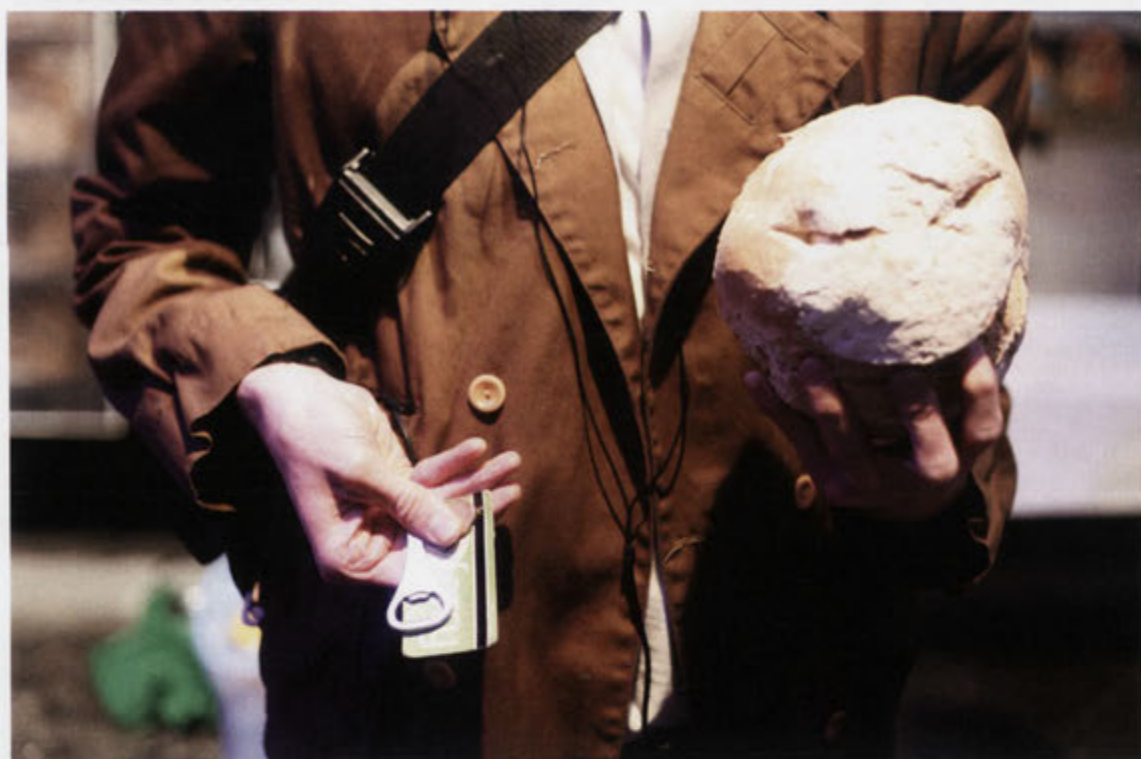


Figure 12.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, Contested Landscape Edition, 23-25/9/2011

Images show the temporary building, set up of mobile baking installation, participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges.

Photographer: Robert Guth

Outcomes

Art-Is-An Bread provided me with lots of information and ideas that helped explore the research areas formalised in the research questions. Some of these findings are shown in an applied setting in the conclusion. Those relating to my interest in indirect reciprocity are explored in the next chapter. Here I expand a few points that I think are of particular interest and best explained in this context directly relating to the narratives.

It appears that the method of asking participants to think about the work prior to their visiting the event was effective. There is evidence in some of the items people swapped for bread that they had invested considerable time and effort before coming. These ranged from drawings made by children, bunches of flowers picked from gardens to a range of bric-a-brac that was surprising at the time. An un-named participant from the edition at The Front who identified himself as a sociologist made the observation that the “Pattern” he observed was that people were either giving food, items with emotional significance or things they did not want anymore. A reasonable number of participants who came unprepared went and found items for sale in the local shop to exchange, this is what informed my hopes for the Sydney edition.

Participants who chose to use the honesty box when it was an option did not have the same considerable investment in time or effort preceding their direct interaction with the work. This did not significantly alter the questions raised about value or their engagement after the exchange. They still had to decide what a loaf of bread was worth to them and they still took it away and presumably ate it.

Extending duration of engagement past the event was probably the most successful part of altering engagement times. By anchoring the work in an object participants took away they had a reminder of the event. This is similar to branding on sporting apparel and small branded objects that are given away for free by marketers. Linking it to something eatable was particularly successful. This may be in part due to the novelty of combining food with art, but I also suspect that mobilising a range of senses (taste and smell) makes it easier for participants to continue thinking about the work. This finding is supported by the number of participants who came to multiple editions or more strongly by those that came back on subsequent days. In these cases participants continued to remember and engage with the work generally bringing back more considered objects each time.

An unexpected observation from the first edition related to Relational Aesthetic’s claims of building utopian micro-communities. No bags for taking the loaves away were provided for participants. This was a considered decision based on making it clear that these loaves were not just loaves of bread but in some way different. On reflection this was an unnecessary complication and was dropped from later editions. In this edition a participant came in without something to exchange, examined what was being

swapped and observed another participants' slight displeasure in not having a bag. She then went to the supermarket and bought a quantity of shopping bags for others to use. On the surface this is the sort of community conviviality that is the basis of exchange in Relational Art. However, it is important to know that the participant was a former student colleague of mine from undergraduate studies. As such she was a member of an informed group that my previous research suggests Relational Aesthetics is accepted by.

At present the most interesting physical outcomes from these four editions of *Art-Is-An Bread* relate to the work in progress leading to the final event at Canberra Contemporary Art Space. The physical outcomes consist of the four collections of objects and photographs that were swapped for loaves of bread at the different localities. As a collection these function as a study of relative worth of a loaf of my bread and participation. The design of that event is expanded in the conclusion.

While the details of some transactions are expanded in the next chapter it is worth noting that the exchanges between participants and events conformed to the general nature of interactions I have proposed. Essentially the engagement took the form of an exchange that functioned outside the financial and was based on the concept found in gift exchange and reciprocity theory. These form the basis of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

GIFT EXCHANGE

How the theory of gift exchange has helped both plan and explain my participatory practice

This project has moved from testing a theoretical understanding of Relational Aesthetics using studio based research to developing a need for a theoretical framework to understand the participant interactions taking place throughout those research events. The following chapter outlines the main framework that I have chosen to consider my practice. The anthropological area of gift exchange and reciprocity has provided useful frameworks that I can apply to my interests in exchange, obligation and freedom in the interactions between the participants and myself. In particular Jan Tullberg's carefully considered framework, (which is used in the second half of this chapter) concerning indirect hospitality has been of value in planning and reviewing the *Art-Is-An Bread* events. His sociobiological perspective provides a fresh way for me to examine my practice, placing it in a wider context.

The Anthropological idea of "Gift" and where participatory art fits

In 1923 when Marcel Mauss in *Essai sur le Don* (The Gift)⁷⁴ argued that gifts are "in theory voluntary, disinterested and spontaneous, but are in fact obligatory and interested"⁷⁵ he created a conceptualisation of gift that is still current. Much has been written that tries to unravel mechanics of why they are "obligatory," how are they "interested" and, if it is even possible for them to be "spontaneous" and free. In 1950 Claude Levi-Strauss made the observation in the introduction to Mauss's collected works,

*Mauss's influence is not limited to ethnographers... but extends also to linguists, psychologists, historians of religion and orientalists; so that a whole constellation of French researchers in the social sciences and the human sciences have in some way got their bearings from him.*⁷⁶

The exploration of these concepts has also of interest to the research in this project. Particularly useful in providing background in this areas have been studies into gift economies⁷⁷ and studies in the Practical Ethics of Hospitality.

Participatory art is often seen as conforming with Mauss's definition of gifts: appearing to be freely given but actually implies obligations and a whole network of factors for its production. In the case of participatory art the social networks involved could generally be termed the "art world." While this social group could sometimes be considered tribal

74 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. (French original *Essai sur le Don*, 1923) (London: Cohen & West, 1969).

75 Ibid.: 4.

76 Claude Levi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 1-2.

77 David Cheal, *The Gift Economy*.

it is a vague conception of community compared to Mauss's clearly defined tribal case studies. The North American Indian groups Mauss based his observations on were self sufficient and isolated societies.⁷⁸ These are not attributes of the global art community. However one of the generally accepted aspects that this group shares with the tribes Mauss examined is the presence of a strong element of non-financial exchange between its members.

The separation of participatory art from the financial economy can be seen in the mode of its presentation within the structures of contemporary art. Participatory works are often placed within the free programs of public galleries, exhibitions, festivals and events. By assigning participatory art to this non-commercial stream in the institution, it is clearly represented as a non-financial commodity. It is very unusual that participants are able to directly support the artist or production of the art-work with money. Instead institutions mount these works with the intent of creating what has commonly come to be termed "cultural capital." This term was established by Pierre Bourdieu and outlined in his 1986 book *The Forms of Capital*⁷⁹ the type of cultural capital being created in my case is the institutionalised form. Bourdieu states that it is:

...the product of investment strategies... aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term, i.e., at transforming contingent relations... into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights).

This is done through the alchemy of consecration, the symbolic constitution produced by social institution... and endlessly reproduced in and through the exchange (of gifts, words, women, etc.) which it encourages and which presupposes and produces mutual knowledge and recognition.⁸⁰

What is important to me in this conceptualisation of social interactions is that the mechanism of the "exchange of gifts" is one of the sites of the "alchemy" of creation of cultural capital. In the frameworks expanded below this can be related to increases of both "Reciprocal Reputation" and "Generous Reputation."

In participatory art the exchange between the viewer/participant and the art-work/artist is located in interactivity. This is perhaps the strongest argument to why participation in this sort of art cannot be considered as part of the financial economy and therefore has to be considered with alternate models of exchange. Marx formulated in *Capital*⁸¹

78 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* 17-45.

79 P. Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital" in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* ed. J. Richardson. (New York: Greenwood 1986) 241-258.

80 Ibid.; p52

81 Marx, Karl, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Ed. Frederick Engels Voll chap1, First English edition Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1887 accessed via <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm> (accessed 12/2/2012)

that for a commodity to be part of the market it must be exchangeable for something essentially different in character. Goods that are traded for similar goods, or within a protected community such as a family are not commodities.⁸² On the basis of this broad definition my art-works are clearly not commodities. They function on exchange of social interactions on the part of all parties concerned within a specific community.

This does not mean that the participatory art-works as packaged events are not commodities. Artists work within the wider economic system and as pointed out by Vazquez.

*The artist is subject to the tastes, preferences, ideas and aesthetic notions of those who influence the market. Inasmuch as he produces works of art destined for a market that absorbs them, the artist cannot fail to heed the exigencies of the market:...*⁸³

Participatory art in a gift economy

Studies of gift economies primarily look at the gift as part of an alternate economy that functions similarly (but without the foundation of money) to the financial economy that is the dominant means of exchange in our culture.⁸⁴ In the case of my research work a declaration of this art-work being part of a gift exchange is built into the way that participants are asked to interact with the project. The structure of expectations of reciprocity is clearly invoked from the first time they are exposed to the work irrespective of them finding out due to pre-publicity or by walking into the space (see Appendix D). It is up to them to find what they want to exchange for the loaf of bread. From the responses offered to me the following process seems to take place: generally participants question what the economic value of a loaf of bread might be to them. This then expands to a consideration of the value of their engagement and the event as an art-work. After this some participants start personalising the exchange by considering objects of higher emotional value to themselves that could be suitable.

Sal Randolph, an artist who makes work that consciously operates between the systems of economic and social exchange sums it up neatly.

*Despite the name, gift economies are somewhat different from what we think of as economies. Material goods can and do change hands, but gift economies are not barter economies. Their purpose is not that of market trade, profit, or subsistence. Though they may be economic benefits in the traditional sense, the reason for entering into gift exchanges are primarily social.*⁸⁵

82 Ibid.: Chapter 1 Section 4 *The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof.*

83 Vazquez, Adolfo, *Art and Society: Essays in Marxist Aesthetics*, Merlin Press, London 1973 p84 from Wolff, Janet. *The Social Production of Art (2nd edn)*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1993. 18.

84 Mark Osteen, "Gift or Commodity," in *The Question of the Gift, essays across disciplines*, ed. Mark Osteen, (London: Routledge, 2002).

85 Randolph, Sal. "Free Words to Free Manifesta: Some Experiments in Art as Gift." *Ethics & the Environment* 8(1), 61-73, 2003.

Defining of the unit of measure in these gift economies is difficult as there is not a universal social currency being exchanged that I can standardise on. The localised meanings of *Mana* in Maori and Polynesian cultures as discussed by Mauss in *The Gift*⁸⁶ are different from what is being exchanged amongst my participants. What remains constant is that the interactions can be described using a combination of exchanges between individuals (direct reciprocity) and within the wider community that they are members of (indirect reciprocity).

Participatory art spans both kinds of reciprocity: a direct exchange with the art-work is required as well as the exchanges that are defined as part of the shared cultural framework. Details of some of these exchanges are expanded in the sections that follow. Sub-sections take individual aspects of an existing framework for examining reciprocity and apply it to my own research. This framework was developed to examine actions often considered as altruistic from a sociobiological perspective.⁸⁷ It is used to clarify the difference between indirect reciprocity and altruism, a motivation sometimes associated with gift giving or making art. By applying this framework to my practice I have reached a greater understanding of possible motivations of participants actions when they engage with my practice.

Jan Tullberg's framework and how it applies to my participatory practice

Jan Tullberg, at the Stockholm School of Economics, has developed over several articles a framework to examine reciprocity from a sociobiological perspective. This builds on his wider research interests⁸⁸ into normative ethic and the biological basis for social behaviour.⁸⁹ He has co-published a book in the area *Natural Ethics: A confrontation with Altruism*.⁹⁰ Of particular interest to my project is a framework from Tullberg that clearly defines several categories of indirect reciprocation: "Reciprocal Reputation," "Generous Reputation," "Institutionalised Reciprocity" and "Metaphysical Reward." This framework was developed to examine the differences between altruism and indirect reciprocity. In the core paper used in my research Tullberg uses the actions

86 Mauss, *The Gift*, 6-12.

87 See explanation on page 12 (in introduction)

88 This is a body of research that has spanned several years and he shares with his wife, Birgitta Tullberg (a professor of zoology at Stockholm University)

89 Birgitta Tullberg & Jan Tullberg, "On Human Altruism: the Discrepancy between Normative and Factual Conclusions," *Oikos*, 75(2) (1996): 327-329.

Jan Tullberg & Birgitta Tullberg, "A Critique of the Naturalistic Fallacy Thesis," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 20 (2001): 165-174.

Jan Tullberg & Birgitta Tullberg, "Proportionalism or liberalism - two ideas of social justice," *Politicon* 33(2) (2006): 147-161.

90 Jan Tullberg & Birgitta Tullberg, *Naturlig Etik - en uppgörelse med altruismen* (Lykeion, Stockholm: Lykeion, 1994). English edition available online only <http://www.tullberg.org/Book.htm> (accessed 7/2/2012).

of suicide bombers as an example of something that is sometimes represented as an altruistic act within militant discourse and can only find indirect reciprocation in the wider community of believers. From it he draws the conclusion that “Altruistic actions are certainly not a major, but a minor, part of human life.”⁹¹ When applied to my participatory practice I believe that this view that motivations can be linked to rewards, no matter how unlikely can add clarity to the actions of participants and how my events function.

In Tullberg’s framework there is a strong reliance on the idea of an internal dynamic defined by an external space that can still contribute to reciprocal exchange. In the case of Tullberg’s example life after death and heaven is the external scaffolding that allows these equations to take place. In participatory art I see the wider community outside direct contact with the art-work as performing a role similar of external support. This is expanded in the “Metaphysical Reward” section that appears later in this chapter. I stress that violently killing oneself and many others is not equivalent to cooking in a gallery, but both can be placed (maybe on opposite ends) on a continuum of attempts to effect change. Both sets of action are based on an ideal of improving the world. This subtext is present in both the “micro-utopias” proposed by Relational Aesthetics as well as the readings that place participatory art (along with performance art) as being somehow critical to the ongoing culture of the gallery and somehow showing at least a partial alternative. In part it was this hope of effecting change that prompted my entry into the field from my more static photographic practice.

Jan Tullberg’s four categories

In this section I shall briefly outline how Tullberg defines his categories before using them to examine participatory art generally and my work in particular.

Tullberg’s categories are: “Reciprocal Reputation,” “Generous Reputation,” “Institutionalised Reciprocity” and “Metaphysical Reward”; these are organised into two pairs. The first two are seen as operating at a personal level within the direct community of the person making the action. In this way they are similar to the gift exchange studies from small urban centres drawn on by Cheal⁹² or other studies that examine gifting within a tribe or kinship group. The second two are seen as operating at a societal level in which reciprocal actions are carried out by the wider community. These are more important to Tullberg’s wider project of examining altruism and indirect reciprocity from starting points of moral philosophy and socio-biology.

91 Mauss, *The Gift*, 6-12.

92 David Cheal, *The Gift Economy*, Chapter 2, drawing on the *Winnipeg Ritual Cycle Study*.

Tullberg creates a table which lists the four categories outlined and in parenthesis the applicable example. Integrated into this table (in small capitals inside square parenthesis) are my examples appropriate to participatory art:⁹³

Indirect Reciprocity

	<u>Substantial Reciprocity</u>	<u>Altruism/Illusionary Reciprocity</u>
<u>Individual</u>	Reciprocal Reputation	Generous Reputation
<u>Level</u>	(credit record) [HELPING PEERS]	(giving to charity) [HOSTING A GOOD OPENING]
<u>Societal</u>	Institutionalised Reciprocity	Metaphysical Reward
<u>Level</u>	[GOVERNMENTAL SUPPORT]	(legal sentence) (suicide bomber) [DIDACTIC CONTENT TO CHANGE SOCIETY]

From this point forwards Tullberg’s terms are not placed inside quotation marks but remain capitalised.

93 Jan Tullberg, “On Indirect Reciprocity, The Distinction Between Reciprocity and Altruism, and a Comment on Suicide Terrorism,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 63(5) (2004) 1206.

Reciprocal Reputation

Tullberg creates a clear image of this form of reciprocity in his paper "On Indirect Reciprocity."⁹⁴ His example is also the simplest model of Indirect Reciprocity relying on direct interactions between all parties involved. Naturally these systems of reciprocity also apply if observations are communicated between people.

Consider a situation with two interacting individuals, A and B, and an observer C. C, depending upon his observation of A and B's interactions, can perform actions of indirect reciprocity. One possibility is the observation that A helps B and B later returns help to A, whereupon C helps B, with the expectation that B will return the help to C... In this case C expects a fruitful reciprocal relationship with B because the latter has shown to be able to reciprocate help, or in other words, has a good reciprocal reputation.⁹⁵

As suggested by the quote this is a form of reciprocity dependent on the parties being part of the same social group. In this form these relationships build a reputation that is known to others in the group and contribute to what I term professional status. In the case of artists I propose that the most important activities relate to competence in the manufacture (craft) of the art-work, physical logistics and an ability to use theoretical frameworks. These are skills that demonstrate ability to function as a useful member of the social group. These actions are easily observable to someone not directly involved in the transaction (labelled "C" in the example above) who can then make a choice to engage with the artist, as shown in in my earlier discussion of participants' reactions in *Art-Is-An Bread*.

There are two levels of Reciprocal Reputation that is built in my work. One is similar to that built by any artist who chooses to take part in their community by exhibiting in institutions. The other is very particular to the events in that I am actually exchanging real objects as part of my engagement with participants. This Reciprocal Reputation concerns the participating public and is built very quickly but also in a very limited way.

Demonstrating my Reciprocal Reputation is built into the structure of the project. For prospective participants who may swap objects for bread, the previous exchanges on display serve as evidence of my individual Reciprocal Reputation. In the editions staged at The Front and in Boorowa it was not uncommon for people who had heard of the event to come, closely observe what had been exchanged, go away - either shopping or home - and return with an item to exchange. They are making informed choices based on my Reciprocal Reputation from first hand experience. As more objects accumulate they were able to make an increasingly informed choice as to my honesty and commitment. It was evident from the range of objects that I really was willing to swap anything for a loaf of bread. This allowed for a freedom of action in participants personalising their responses while the public display also valued thought and imagination on their part.

94 Ibid.: 1196.

95 Ibid.: 1197.

It is possible that a greater degree of Reciprocal Reputation could have been carried on from event to event if this had been a priority. Instead I chose in favour of maximising local difference to make what I believe is an aesthetically stronger work. This was done by the use of ambiguous images that could not be used as direct examples for participants to follow. Also in all written texts I left as wide a range as possible: This decision was made with the final work in mind. I believe this strategy stopped a large number of very similar objects being exchanged. It did mean that every edition was visually starting from the beginning again as participants had no visual evidence of my Reciprocal Reputation.

The second category of Reciprocal Reputation being built is related to my status within the art making community. This is essentially the same as if I was exhibiting in more traditional mediums like painting or sculpture. By delivering on my promises to hosting organisations, other institutions and individuals can see that I do reciprocate their gifts of assistance and creditability. The growth of my reputation is perhaps most clearly seen in the progression of host organisations; from small private café/gallery through a voluntary public organisation to increasingly well funded public arts events.

Generous Reputation

Tullberg states:

A Generous Reputation may cause popularity but may generate less cooperation, [than a Reciprocal Reputation] because individuals with egoistic or altruistic strategies may have other ambitions.⁹⁶

Within the social structures of the art world I propose that Generous Reputation is something that is shared between the host gallery/institution and the artist. This makes Generous Reputation a particularly interesting area of reciprocity as it is one of the areas of interaction between the artist, institution and the audience. Why this is so important is that it relates Generous Reputation to the institutions generation of Bourdieu's "cultural capital." I would go so far as to suggest that galleries in part present participatory works to exhibit "conspicuous benevolence" a term that Tullberg borrows from Coleman⁹⁷ (1991) used to describe overt displays of benevolence that were performed for personal gain. This action can according to Tullberg "generate indirect effects such as respect, ability to reciprocate, envy or admiration."⁹⁸ While the last two of these effects are normally considered negative emotions, they can in this setting conceivably be associated with the creation of cultural capital.

96 Ibid.: 1199.

97 Coleman, J. "On the Self-Suppression of Academic Freedom" *Academic Questions* 4(21) (1991). From Tullberg, "On Indirect Reciprocity, The Distinction Between Reciprocity and Altruism, and a Comment on Suicide Terrorism," 1199.

98 Tullberg, "On Indirect Reciprocity, The Distinction Between Reciprocity and Altruism, and a Comment on Suicide Terrorism," 1199.

Commercial gallery openings are an example of this split presentation of art-works. While the events are clearly labelled as the artists' opening, it is in fact the gallery that is acknowledged as hosting the event and stands to make the most of the Generous Reputation created. At a different scale aspects of this interaction can be seen in the relationship of biennales and works inside them. In these cases I suggest that the artist also receives an increase in Reciprocal Reputation due to their association with an institution.

Generous Reputation was an important element in the engagement with participants in the *Art-Is-An Bread* events. When I made the initial offer of exchanging bread for what ever was given this was a 'generous act.' Participants had to trust that I was sincere in my offer to them. In that way they were relying on my Generous Reputation. Some participants actually chose to test the limits of this by offering objects that they believed I might not accept. My favourite example of this sort of behaviour happened at the edition at The Front where I was presented with a used disposable fork. I believe that the presenter's intention was to cause a breakdown of the system of reciprocity in place. I chose instead to accept the object in good faith, confirming both my Generous and Reciprocal Reputations.

Institutionalised Reciprocity

Tullberg uses the example of the understanding amongst Palestinian communities that the family of suicide bombers will be looked after by both Hamas and the community the bomber came from as an example of Institutionalised Reciprocity.⁹⁹ In the case of participatory art, this is a harder line to draw since as outlined in the Reciprocal Reputation section institutions can function as individuals performing single acts of reciprocal generosity in commissioning particular works or events. Far rarer are cases where institutions act to provide systemic support over an extended period.

The important characteristic of this sort of reciprocity is its ongoing contractual nature and that it is not motivated solely out of services rendered by the individual. In the case of the suicide bomber the benefit is devolved to their remaining family whilst the artist can be the direct receiver of benefits. At present I consider the opportunity to pursue my doctoral candidature as the prime site of my receiving Institutional Reciprocity. As in the general cases mentioned before it is the result of my demonstrating contributions to the community that the university and I share in common. The expected reciprocal return for this support is adding to the body of knowledge in a way that is useful to the community.

Tullberg proposes that in some cases where behaviour might be considered altruistic it is actually motivated by hopes of reciprocation in this form of reciprocation and Metaphysical Reward. This makes it difficult to write about my engagement without

99 Ibid.: 1202.

sounding glib, arrogant, cynical or a combination of all three. When examining and explaining my project I seldom would dare to state either the sense of privilege I feel in being able to continue my practice explored above or my hopes for my work expanded below in the next sub-section.

Metaphysical Reward

The hope of reciprocity through Metaphysical Rewards as a cause for action as opposed to altruism is central to Tullberg's framework. In the introduction to an earlier paper *On Indirect Reciprocity – Between Reciprocity and Altruism*¹⁰⁰ (2000) he writes, "The value of altruism as a social factor needs to be reconsidered in the light of an improved understanding of human behaviour."¹⁰¹ His finding is that even in the case of suicide bombers the hope for reciprocity in the form of rewards in heaven is a strong motivating factor. For my project it is sufficient to consider the wider community outside the art world as the site for these rewards. This is due to the socially contained nature of most participatory art as compared to terrorist attacks, which by their very design are an attempt to violently affect a larger community.

For the purpose of examining participatory practice it is important and exciting that actions can be motivated by the hope of reciprocity from outside the social framework that it was carried out in. It allows for the inclusion of underlying ethical motivations of the artist in the analysis of the work. In my case I live in hope of actually changing the way people interact with the world in their everyday existence. In this project Metaphysical Rewards would come from people becoming aware and changing their habit patterns around self reliance, money and consumption. It may seem strange that I should consider goals of changing the way people interact with the world in their everyday existence as metaphysical. However in doing so I am acknowledging how a deeply held belief affects my practice while remaining aware of the limited power of my work.

100 Tullberg, Jan. "On Indirect Reciprocity: Between Reciprocity and Altruism" presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Politics and the Life Sciences in Washington, DC, USA, September 2, 2000. Accessed via <http://www.tullberg.org/Papers/Thesis1.pdf> 11/1/2012

101 Ibid.

CONCLUSION

This concluding chapter is structured around the preparations for the final event in the *Art-Is-An Bread series*. In this way this chapter is similar to the previous chapters of this exegesis. In addition efforts have been made to show how elements of this art-work directly relate to the research questions formulated at the end of the introduction.

My concerns in designing this event differ slightly from the proceeding events. This work acts both as a demonstration of findings into my research frameworks and as research practice. The expectations of Canberra Contemporary Art Space (CCAS) who are hosting the event are also more developed than previous organisations. CCAS is Canberra's publicly funded contemporary art institution. It is a suitable venue to present a work that is more resolved for public involvement that does not mobilise the element of being part of a research project.

After informal discussions in May 2011 with David Broker, the director of CCAS, I submitted an application to exhibit, that document is Appendix B. At that time many elements were still in development and that document focuses on the logistical concerns of working in the gallery and the un-resolved questions of display techniques. The *Contested Landscape* edition was only a vague possibility and the idea of swapping objects for money was completely untried. The findings from Sydney that, within the structure of the *Art-Is-An Bread* events, participants were not interested in engaging with money has been applied in the design by emphasising the food part of the event discussed later in the chapter.

In late November 2011 CCAS requested a shorter explanation of what the work would be. I sent them the following

Drinks, Doughnuts, Kangaroo Doner Kebabs and Stuff

Concluding Art-Is-An Bread: What is "Stuff" worth as art?

This work, which comprises 400 objects together with individual photographic records, centres on changes in the value of objects as they move from one economy to another. Each of the 400 objects, being offered in the gallery as Readymades, were initially exchanged for a loaf of bread as part of an ongoing series of live art events. To their previous owner and to me, the exchanged objects were, at that time, worth a loaf of my Art-Is-An Bread. Now, as art objects within the gallery space, packaged with photographic documentation of their transformation, what are they worth? By offering them in the framework of a silent - and live - auction we can all find out.

The performative element of this work will be a dinner and live auction that acts to replace a traditional exhibition opening. Food will be provided and volunteers will auction a selection of the objects. This will create a convivial atmosphere and social "Buzz" that is a recognised part of the art sales environment.

This work's formal qualities of mobilising food and an event to create a convivial social space, places it recognisably within the bounds of Relational Aesthetics. In its content, which examines the nature of value and exchange, it hopes to provide space to reflect on the structures that we inhabit as members of the arts community.

This document is a summary of the conceptual intentions for the work. The more detailed frameworks were explained in the original submission, Appendix B. All of my motivations and expected mechanisms of engagement and reciprocation do not need to be explained here to my hosts.

A level of flexibility has to be built into the design of the art-works in these events. I am in the process of asking primary participants for help. These are all people who I have ongoing relationships with in a range of settings that include, business, friendship, Masonry and academia. A draft of this chapter (and an excerpt explaining my system of levels of participation) will be sent to them as part of the process of informing them as primary participants and building a community around the work. I am using people's actual names here as an acknowledgment of my appreciation of their assistance.

Anni Doyle has promised to act as producer/stage manager. Anni is on the board of CCAS and her involvement is hoped to simplify my negotiations with the host. Internal to the event her role of stage manager is integral to the persona I am going to project of competence by having time to engage with secondary participants instead of managing the logistics of the event.

Ciran Bird has agreed to help as a gallery/sales assistant during the event. Ciran and I are both members of the Masonic Lodge Commonwealth of Australia. If possible I hope to have five or six members of the lodge in attendance. My idealised use of this group would see them, in the first part of the evening, acting as un-identified helpers, appearing to be un-associated gallery visitors then becoming identifiable during the live auction part of the event. This means that during the informal portion of the event they can act with the appearance of impartiality of secondary participants to encourage engagement, perhaps to the extent of placing false bids on objects to create interest. Then during the formal auction when their involvement as primary participants becomes known to the secondary participants, their actions in the first part of the evening can be reviewed and examined for motives of reciprocal gain from me as opposed to the interactions of equal participants. Until I meet with this group of participants this is purely speculative as it would be reasonable for them to have ethical reasons for not behaving in this way.

Ian Bass will provide support in providing and moving equipment. In exchange for his time spent on my projects I help him with his marquee hire business. It is though Ian that I was able to purchase the tables used for the event at approximately the same cost as hiring them. Ian will act as my assistant on one or two days before the event. Being a well-spoken older gentleman (See the second photo in Figure 12) his appearance suggests to secondary participants the complex social and professional networks of my practice.

Buying the tables for the event has helped resolved some the display issues that have been a continual consideration in the planning of this event. In the limited mock up and discussion I have had with my academic cohort, how to display the objects has been the main topic of discussion. For economic reasons I discarded all the suggestions that involved building display systems that allowed for wall display or freestanding shelves. Studio trialing will take place in the next month but offering the tables for sale provides a reason for leaving them uncovered. It is consistent with my concerns about value that an object I am selling is open and exposed to view.

The other important acquisition in designing the event was several hundred used pizza trays and around fifty second-hand anodised aluminium trays made by Fink Design. With these elements I will be able to devise a display that provides unity to the large range of objects exchanged. Details of display will be experimented with in the next month but the basic form has been set. The objects, photographs and bid sheets will be displayed on trays which will then be part of the art-work that is offered for sale. In the case of the pizza trays this adds an object that has practical utility to the participants consideration of value. How the Fink trays are used is still unclear, the two most likely ways are either for the lots being offered in the live auction or to denote my pick of the “best” exchanges. Both of these uses have the problem that they link the more desirable tray with the more desirable object whereas using them in a setting that allows for examination of the participants perceived value of the trays is more personally interesting.

The role of running the kangaroo doner kebab service is important as it is likely to be the prime place that participants will ask about how they can contribute to recovering expenses of the art-work. I am basing this assumption on the behaviour of participants in *Grill-a Soup* where I was asked while serving about contributing. I am asking Elliot Farval, a friend whose good natured but blunt manner is well suited to directing secondary participants to go and bid on items. I can not perform this function myself, as there is a higher possibility of causing offence without causing the desired engagement.

A group of primary participants that I have not addressed yet are the auctioneers for the live auction part of the event. In consultation during seminars with my cohort the general agreement seemed to be that these should be sourced from the arts community on the basis of their respected position. This mobilisation of individuals cultural capital and social standing is attractive in adding another element in the work. At this point the only people I have considered approaching are: Anni Doyle, David Broker (director CCAS), Gordon Bull (head of the School of Art) and Gail Lubbock the patron who supported my materials grant from the ANU School of Art patrons fund. In choosing these people I am also publicly acknowledging my gratitude towards them personally or their institutions.

How I dress the primary participants will depend on what individuals are willing to participate in. At the moment I plan to wear a Tyvek suit and hopefully Ian Bass and those involved in the food and service will as well. Tyvek suits reference my cooking persona constructed throughout the project. In the case of those helping with food they also provide excellent protection of their regular clothes. Possibly my Masonic colleagues will wear their dinner suits to make them clearly identifiable and add a business like atmosphere to the event that could potentially lead to greater engagement in the sales portion of the art-work. This will depend on the roles they are willing to play.

Using the research questions formalised at the end of the introduction as a framework the following section discusses the practical outcomes of research to my practice and how they relates to this art-work.

Research Question – applied answers

How and why do audiences engage in participatory art?

In this project I have used the Generous Reputation, cultural capital and the structure of events provided by hosts to encourage participants to engage in the events. For this event at CCAS I am particularly mobilising the reputation of the hosts to have enjoyable openings. They are part of a community that attends such events through shared and mutual interest. I hope that once an audience is present I will be able to shape engagement in specific directions.

My research has developed findings on how the mechanisms of engagement function once the invitation to participate has been accepted. In this event I will also be mobilising the offering of food in an associated action by providing dinner to create a sense of indebtedness. By doing this I will be trying to convert the generous act of giving away food into a sense of reciprocal obligation to participate to the full extent possible in the art-work. This is a direct mobilisation of reciprocal obligation that can remain internal to the work and is separate from the mobilisation of Generous Reputation (cultural capital of the host) that may cause initial engagement.

What and how much can be asked from the audience in participatory art?

Participants have shown a willingness to engage beyond my expectations at the start of this project. What was asked in return for full engagement progressed steadily from Cooking for the Well Fed through Grill – a Soup to the level of exchanged asked for as part of the Art-Is-An Bread events. During the Contested Landscape edition the limit of participants engagement was reached. Offering objects and photographs as artworks in exchange of money failed to engage any participants. In this event I will again ask participants to exchange objects for money. However it is hoped that adding further reciprocal obligations by using food will make it more appealing to participate.

What expectations do participants in participatory art have?

Participants' expectations vary so all research in this area has pointed at finding a lowest common denominator of participation. This has been harder than expected as it became evident that events were not always identified as participatory rather than performance, where attendees expect to be audience and observers. This is most clearly seen in *Cooking for the Well Fed* when I asked the audience for a show of hands if they thought they were part of a participatory work and nearly all indicated they did not.

On the basis of that observation, effort has gone into making it clear to audiences that participation is in fact part of the event. This in turn has led me to the conclusion that in my practice the participants' expectation is that they will be informed of the chance to participate.

For the upcoming event it will be made clear what participation will involve. An important aspect of this will be defining and communicating the various levels of activity going on in the event so the audience can make an informed decision as to if and how they wish to engage in any or all of them. These various levels also act as enticement for particular audiences to attend. There are three main streams of participation I will identify to the audience: a conclusion to the *Art-Is-An Bread* events with the auction of the collected objects, new work based on kangaroo doner kebab and celebrating the end of my degree.

What use is the framework of Relational Aesthetics in my participatory practice?

Several of the early events demonstrated that Relational Aesthetics has a limited use in my practice. However *Baking in the Gallery* showed that it is a framework that I can mobilise for audiences where it is appropriate due to their prior knowledge of the theory. CCAS is such an audience and the inclusion of the term in the document prepared for the institution is a start of making it an identifiable element of the work. Mobilised in this way Relational Aesthetics hopes to connect with previous understandings that these participants might already have and provide them with an additional reason for engagement.

Beyond using Relational Aesthetics as a label for my work to make it explicable, it does not have a part in the active planning of events in my practice. Instead I have found the frameworks of various types of reciprocity discussed in the next heading more useful.

What frameworks best describe how I perceive audience actions?

I describe my work using models of reciprocity to understand participants' motivations for actions. Within that wide field Jan Tullberg's model where indirect reciprocity broken down into four types has been particularly useful to place the various relationships I develop with hosts and audiences.

Each of Tullberg's categories has been at least slightly addressed in the planning of this work. My Reciprocal Reputation is enabling me to ask for assistance from various individuals to help. Any Generous Reputation I have is being combined with CCAS as part of the reason that an audience will chose to attend. Institutional Reciprocity is taking the forms of a grant to develop part of the menu and an impetus for this event, associated with my doctoral candidature, taking place. Metaphysical Reward is addressed in hopes of actually changing the way participants respond to the world outside the art-work around the concepts addressed. As well as those established in the earlier *Art-Is-An Bread* events these will also relate to perceptions around food and culture due to my choice of menu.

How can I engage the audience and communicate conceptually?

Over the course of the project I have built up a more generalised expertise around how a participatory art-work successfully communicates. The balance between the necessary elements, understanding the expectations of the participants regarding engagement and the formal design of the work is crucial. This latest work continues balancing the elements in this relationship with the food being one of the main offers of engagement in the work. The halal kangaroo doner kebab acts as a hook for participant engagement with the overall event while not directly relating to the core conceptual content of *Art-Is-An Bread*. Instead it carries content of its own as it continues the examination of perceived cultural migration via food started in *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb*. This nesting of various elements is a new development within my practice based on my improved understandings of how to communicate with participants at a range of levels.

How does perception of the artist's performance effect participants' expectations and experience of an event?

The most interesting observations in this area relate to the line of expectations between performance and participation. The usual perception seems to be that an event is a performance. Only by the artist (or artists' agent) pointing out the participatory nature of an event does it become participatory. This should not have been surprising given the expectations of non-interaction associated with art presented in galleries or traditional performance forms. This understanding has led to the consideration of possible performance personas that contribute to the content or form of the events. My continuing use of Tyvek coveralls, which identify me as cook and worker, is one way I have used costuming to develop this area.

The particular persona being developed for this work is a blend of competent artist and resourceful student. This moves away slightly from the emphasis put on competency of food handling that was developed during the preceding *Art-Is-An Bread* events. I have done this due to the auxiliary role that food is taking in the art-work, both in form

and content. Primary participants will be dealing with the food service, freeing me up to concentrate on interacting with participants in relation to the objects being offered as art-works. The choice of the second part of this persona is designed to reinforce the appeal to the audience for full participation by spending money.

How can food be mobilised to engage and communicate with audiences in my practice?

In this project I have used food primarily to offer engagement and to feed people. Unfortunately I have found that providing food in this generous way seems to operate the basic human response to enjoy food at the expense of thought. This has made me consider how to use food divorced from the act of eating. The event *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* was the first successful attempt at combining a participatory event with eating. In that event the food was considered as an object that operates independently to the participatory event.

In this art-work halal kangaroo doner kebab will function in a similar way. It will both be an object of interest outside the context of the event as well as providing a hook or focus point for my interactions with both traditional and social media in my publicity for the event.

What is the nature of exchange that takes place between the participant and artist?

The idea of an artist offering a gift to the audience continues to be deeply appealing. Via this research project I have been able to examine what the nature of such a gift might be according to a network of reciprocal motivations. In addition to those explored above using the Tullberg categories the primary, secondary and tertiary participants have all been considered in this work, including some of the reciprocal relationships that are activated in their engagement.

Primary participants in this case will be a range of people who will be assisting in the stagecraft of the event. Those assisting with catering have worked with me on various volunteer-run catering jobs. I am asking them to help me on the basis of my Reciprocal Reputation. Secondary participants will be made up of members of my extended arts community as such they are privy to both my Reciprocal and Generous Reputations. It is their response to these that is the key to their motivation for participating. As always details of tertiary participants' engagement must remain unknown in detail. However in this case I expect some of them to be people reading this exegesis in the future. It is their engagement that has given shape to this documentation of my project.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.

Documentation of *Baked Boiled Fried*, 5/4/2008

Image within image format prepared for an artists talk to show what participants brought and the setting of the event.

Photographer: Asher Floyd

Figure 2.

Documentation of *Paddle Pop Love Letter*, 12/4/2008

Image shows three drafts and the final object inside the paddle pop wrapper

Photographer: Robert Guth

Figure 3.

Documentation of *Birthday Cookup*, 26/4/2008

Images show general setting of the event, behavior of guests and details the stages of cooking the whole kangaroo

Photographer: Robert Guth

Figure 4.

Documentation of *Cooking for the Well Fed*, 10/5/2008

Images show me preparing vegetable tempura on the street, participants distributing and eating the food, me presenting my *Pecha Kucha* talk and a tray showing the dipping patterns of participants.

Photographers: Michell Lim and last image Robert Guth

Figure 5.

Documentation of *Grill-a Soup*, 25/5/2008

Images show general setting, my placement relative to the musicians, how the food was served and how participants collected plates to take away.

Photographers: Steven Guth

Figure 5.1

Documentation of *Grill-a Soup*, 25/5/2008

Smashed and Taken

An experimental way of showing the two outcomes for participants from the event.

Photographer: Robert Guth

Figure 6.

Documentation of *Mongolian Kangaroo*, 8-30/3/2009

Images show participants engaged in cutting out pieces of skin, a class from the art academy holding their pieces up, three pieces on a desk that I signed and me explaining the project as part of an artists' talk to the Blue Sun artists collective.

Photographer: Dalkha

Figure 6.1

Image shows a performance made in the main square of Ulaanbaatar. I am dressed in reference to my Southeast Asian heritage eating an ice-cream.

Photographer: Dalkha

Figure 7.

Documentation of *Mongolian Mongolian Lamb – Australian Mongolian Lamb* 5/9/2009

Images show participants engaged in preparing and eating Mongolian hotpot a dish similar to a hangi or umu in that the cooking is done with rocks that are heated over a fire then combined in a confined space with the food.

Photographer: Robert Guth

Figure 8.

Documentation of *Bread in the Gallery*, 4/6/2010

Images show some of the layout of the space as well as participants engaged in shaping and decorating loaves of bread and some of the finished loaves.

Photographer: Steven Guth

Figure 9.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, The Front Edition, 24-26/7/2010

Images show set up of mobile baking installation, participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place.

Photographers: Robert Guth and *Steven Guth

Figure 10.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, Boorowa Edition, 3-5/3/2011

Images show set up of mobile baking installation, participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place.

Photographers: Robert Guth

Figure 11.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, You Are Here Edition, 12-19/03/2011

Images show participants engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place, including the exchange of the song *Sourdough man*. (used on the documentation DVD as background to the main menu)

Photographers: Robert Guth

Figure 12.

Documentation of *Art-Is-An Bread*, Contested Landscape Edition, 23-25/9/2011

Images show the temporary building, set up of mobile baking installation, participants' engagement with the event, the collection of objects swapped for bread and examples of exchanges that took place.

Photographers: Robert Guth

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Timeline of research including materials and scale of events

This is a chronological listing of research works produced in the course of this project. Where foodstuffs are listed under materials these are particular to the work. Other general ingredients were also used. Participants in this case refer to people who directly engaged with the work. Using the three levels of participation I develop in the main document they would be considered either primary or secondary participants.

Baked boiled fried

Date: 5/4/2008

Materials: food sourced from participants, large quantities staples (sweet potato (baked), rice porridge (boiled)) domestic oven, gas burners, sink, small industrial flat plate griddle, Tyvek suit.

Venue: suburban house in Campbell, ACT

Participants: between 40-50

Paddle Pop Love Letter

Date: 12/4/2008

Material: paper, used Paddle Pop Stick and wrapper, Australia Post

Venue: bedroom, Balmain, NSW

Participants: 1

Birthday cook up

Date: 26/4/2008

Material: whole baby kangaroo, domestic oven, gas burners, small industrial flat plate griddle, Tyvek suit

Venue: suburban house in Downer, ACT

Participants: 15-25

Cooking for the well fed

Date: 10/5/2008

Material: vegetable tempura, domestic gas burners, 2 woks, Tyvek suit

Venue: Knightsbridge Penthouse (bar), Braddon, ACT

Participants: 120-150

Grill-a Soup

Date: 25/5/2008

Material: modified wooden table with gas burner, wok, vegetable tempura, tomato soup, bread dumplings, secondhand bowls, Tyvek suit

Venue: O'Conner wetlands, O'Conner, ACT

Participants: 60-80

Mongolian Kangaroo Skin

Date: 8-30/3/2009

Material: large red kangaroo skin, sharp spring-loaded shears

Venue: various places around Ulaanbaatar

Participants: 50-60

Mongolian Mongolian Lamb Australian Mongolian Lamb

Date: 5/9/2009

Material: whole dressed sheep, oyster, hoi sin and tomato sauce, potatoes, carrots, onions, green shallots, vodka, fire drum, river rock, modified wooden table with gas burner, modified Kentucky Fried Chicken pressure deep fryer, loud gas burner,

Venue: ANU School of Art Gallery, Action, ACT

Participants: 100-120

Baking in the Gallery

Date: 4/6/2010

Material: bread dough, gas catering oven, mini green house converted into bread prover, toppings (mixed herbs, black sesame, white sesame, cumin seeds, polenta, oil), cutters, Tyvek suit

Venue: ANU School of Art Gallery, Action, ACT

Participants: 50-70

Art-Is-An Bread

Date: 24/7-25/9/2011

Material: flour, honey, oil, salt, water, gas catering oven, 30 liter spiral mixer, low work bench, custom prover (plywood box), bread cooling rack, Tyvek suit

Venues: The Front, Lynham, ACT

The Pantry on Pudman, Boorowa, NSW

Produce pavillion Boorowa Show, Boorowa, NSW

Vacant shop, Civic bus interchange, ACT

Tempoary structure forecourt Old Customs House, Sydney, NSW

Participants: 600-700

What is stuff worth?

Date: 30-31 2012

Materials: Objects exchanged for bread in the *Art-Is-An Bread* events, second-hand pizza trays, second-hand Fink design trays, kangaroo doner kebab, machine made cake doughnuts (made on site)

Venue: Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Braddon, ACT

Participants: 200 (projected)

Appendix B

Submission to CCAS for final Exhibition Examination

Robert Guth Art-Is-An Bread CCAS Auction and Performance



Two of the photographs taken of participants as part of the Art-Is-An Bread project. Prints and digital copies will be offered along with the actual objects in this work.

The basic format of this work is similar to the CAPO charity auction. Objects will be offered for silent auction for an extended period of time and then as a finale a live auction takes place within the setting of a social gathering.

The objects that are being auctioned were all swapped for loaves of bread at the three editions of Art-Is-An Bread, held in Canberra and Boorowa (rural NSW). In these preceding art-works participants were offered the opportunity of swapping a loaf of my freshly baked bread for whatever they thought it was worth. As part of the process they had their photograph taken holding the loaf of bread and their swapped object.

Between 400 and 500 lots will be displayed, each one will consist of an object, a small print and a digital file of the image of the photograph taken as part of the exchange. Over the course of the day preceding the live auction event the public will be able to view the works and use the silent auction bid sheets. In the evening a selection of objects will then be auctioned off live to the assembled crowd. At the end of the night the auction winners can take their objects home.

The objects to be auctioned live will be selected by “auctioneers” who will have contacted me through an open call process that will occur as part of the pre-publicity of the event. I expect that ten people at most will want to participate in this way. Each person will be directed to select ten objects to sell. As live auctioning takes time, these numbers can be adjusted on the night but in total about one hundred objects would be sold in this way.

More time to set up would allow for more complex installation possibilities so these are minimum time needs. A running order for the event could look something like:

- Thursday. Set up.
- Friday. Set up.
- Saturday. 10am Open to the public and have silent auction running, have bread as nibbles on hand.
 3pm PhD examination.
 5pm open to public – drinks and nibbles (Themed on food used in previous works.)
 6pm start serving proper food (see attached menu ideas).
 8pm live auction.
 9:30pm finish auction.
 10:30pm sweep up.
- Sunday. Open to public and clean up.
- Monday. Clean up and bump out.

The formal aesthetics of the installation are still being investigated. There are two basic versions that I am considering at this point. The first is to display the items on individual shelves around the walls of the gallery. The second is to place them on some variation of plinths or tables.

Both systems have their logistical and conceptual benefits and downfalls. At the moment I am tending towards the tables for simple physical considerations as well as the possibility of subtle nuances relating to various art sales environments.

The display on tables has direct similarities to how objects are presented in viewing rooms run by auction houses. Unlike the gallery it leaves room for the viewer to question how to place each object along their personal continuum of bric-a-brac to art. In these environments art objects are not presented to maximise their preciousness or aura of rarity, rather they are shown as objects that allow the bidders to imagine what the potential of the objects could be. By presenting them in such a democratic way it gives the viewer every chance to evaluate the objects on their own terms instead of being directed by the choices of the curator.

A display of objects on tables also links to the presentation of Anthropological artifacts and it is good that this collection can be interpreted in this way. Like any collection of artifacts that can be related to particular cultural groups this body of objects is interesting to examine with an anthropological eye. There are real differences between the sorts of objects offered in exchange in Boorowa and Canberra. While emphasising differences in communities and the wide range of objects exchanged is not an important part of the work it is a subtext that viewers seemingly enjoy.

There are also some very good logistical reasons for using a table based system. It will be quick to move into the gallery and will take up less space. If an average of eight objects is placed on a table I would only need to find 60 trestle tables and cloths. This is a much more achievable goal then building shelves for nearly five hundred objects.

However it is a fine line between a table of readymade art objects and something that looks like a jumble sale. It is possible that after the current trials into staging are

completed it may become obvious that these subtleties will be lost and the objects require as much help as possible for them to achieve the desired status of art objects.

As with all of my event/art-works in this series the offering of food to the audience is part of the work. In this case food suitable for dinner would be provided. The menu would be yeast dough based and at the moment the three most likely options are Pizza, Pide and Kangaroo Doner kebab. These three options allow for differing levels of audience participation in the making of them. The final menu choices can be made closer to the event when scale and logistical possibilities are known.

Robert Guth

Mobile: 0428 458866

Appendix C

All information sheets and forms approved by ANU department of human ethics used with participants during the *Art-Is-An Bread* events.

Research Event Information Sheet

Art-Is-An Bread

This research event is being undertaken as part of doctoral studies at the School of Art, College of Arts and Social Sciences, at the Australian National University. The project is supported by an ANU CASS PhD Scholarship.

This research is being undertaken to better understand links between quality of participation and the value of experiences or objects to the participating audience (you).

The research consists of being given a loaf of bread and asked a series of questions about how you value the experience and loaf of bread.

Please note that there is a video recording being made of the general scene. In the future this video may be use in whole or part for public display, research or the creation of another art-work. In addition I may use a sound recorder to aid my note taking.

Depending on which of the research events you are attending you may be asked to participate more or less fully in the production of the loaf of bread you are taking away with you. It is how these differing levels of participation alter your opinion of what you have been participating in that is of interest to this project.

The project objectives are:

- to develop an understanding of how different ways of offering objects or opportunities for participation are received and valued by an audience.
- to develop insights into the relationships between participation and value of an event or object.

The outcomes of this research:

- contribute towards an understanding of ways participation can be shaped to enrich participants interaction.
- contribute towards the refinement of research event design, culminating as part of a doctoral exhibition of final research outcomes at the conclusion of the doctoral program. Please tell me if you want to be informed of this exhibition.
- provide you with a loaf of bread and possibly a different way of looking at art events or voluntary participation.

Possibly you will be asked to be photographed as part of the documentation of the event. The possible use of these images is outlined in the Interview consent form. Recording taken during the interview, such as audio, video or photography, will be made available to you upon request, in so far as those recordings relate to you.

Please feel free to not answer questions, cease participation, or request that material not be used at any time.

Thank you for your help with this research. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

You should also be aware of the following points that relate to the Human Ethics guidelines I have to follow as part of working in a university.

That while information gained during the research project may be published in academic journals or books, your name, position and title will not be used in relation to any of the information provided, unless you explicitly indicate that you are willing to be identified when quoted.

That recorded audio or visual media that relates to you will be made available upon request.

consent will be sought prior to any audio or visual material being used in publications.

That any personal, sensitive or potentially incriminating information will be kept confidential so far as the law allows.

The forms and any other data collected throughout the duration of the project will be stored separately in a locked office at the Australian National University. Digitally recorded media (audio or visual) and data entered onto a computer will be kept in a computer accessible only by password by Robert Guth.

That although any comments you make will not be attributed in any publication; it is possible that others may guess the source of information, as such you should avoid disclosing information which is of confidential status or which is defamatory of any person or organisation.

Kind regards, Robert Guth

You can contact me as the primary Investigator:

Robert Guth

Phone: +61 42845 8866

Email: Robert.guth@anu.edu.au

School of Art

Building Number 105b

The Australian National University

ACT 0200 Australia

My academic Supervisor is:

Martyn Jolly

Phone: +61 2 6125 5815

Email: martyn.jolly@anu.edu.au

School of Art

Building Number 105

The Australian National University

ACT 0200 Australia

This research operates under the research ethics protocols of the University, and any questions or complaints can be forwarded to:

Human Research Ethics Committee

Office of Research Integrity

Research Office

Level 3

Innovations Building 124

Eggleston Road

The Australian National University, ACT 0200

Tel: 6125 □ 7945 Fax: 6125 □ 4807

Email:

Human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au

Oral consent script for Art-Is-An Bread

Good afternoon/morning/day

My name is Robert Guth, this is a research project that is part of my PhD studies at ANU school of art, maybe you'd like to participate?

This work is about what you think the value of a loaf of bread might be depending on how you receive it.

Basically I'm going to give you a loaf of bread and gauge how you value it as an object and as art.

From this I'm going to work out ways of giving stuff away that means the gift is valued more highly.

You should understand what is going to happen with what you tell me and I find out.

Academia is about publishing, sharing information. What you tell me might end up in an article, art-work video or something. I won't use anything to identify you unless you specifically tell me that it's all right. However you should not say anything that is confidential or defamatory towards anyone or organization, it's just possible a reader might work out who you are from a comment you make.

If we come to quotes that I'd like to attribute to you there is a form I'd like you to fill in anyway.

That goes for photos as well, if you don't fill in the form there is no way I can use photos of you so please help me remember to fill in the form.

If we do go down that road and I write articles and stuff I'll try and find you so you can see what I'm doing with your words and photos BEFORE publication. You can of course stop me from using it then.

What you say to me in confidential as far as the law allows. If you tell me you killed someone, sorry I have to go to the police on that.

All the information, photos, interviews, forms and stuff will be stored at the ANU under lock and key. Anything that is on a computer is only accessible to me with a password.

And the most important thing is you are free. Free to walk away at any time. If you do withdraw everything you have contributed to the project disappears. All that remains is the loaf of bread you take with you.

Here is an information sheet that goes into more detail as to what I'm doing.

So, do you consent to participate in this research?

Robert Guth
Art-Is-An Bread
Research Event

Please take notice

There is a video camera recording in this area as part of an ANU PhD research project.

Collected footage may be used in whole or part for public display and for research purposes.

Apologies for any inconvenience

This research operates under the research ethics protocols of the University, and any questions or complaints can be forwarded to:

Human Research Ethics Committee

Office of Research Integrity

Research Office

Chancelry 10B

The Australian National University, ACT 0200

Tel: 6125-7945 Fax: 6125-4807

Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Interview Consent Form

Art-Is-An Bread

1. I(please print) consent to take part in Art-Is-An Bread. I have read the information sheet for this project and understand its contents. I have had the nature and purpose of the research project, so far as it affects me, fully explained to my satisfaction by the research worker. My consent is freely given.

2. I understand that while information gained during the research project may be published in academic journals, books or used in public display (particularly in the case of photographs and video), my name and position title will not be used in relation to any of the information I have provided, unless I explicitly indicate that I am willing to be identified when quoted.

3. I understand that if I agree to be recorded on audio or visual media, it will be made available upon request.

Prior to publication of any audio or visual material, consent will be sought from the participant with a copy sent to them for approval.

4. I understand that any personal, sensitive or potentially incriminating information will be kept confidential so far as the law allows. This form and any other data collected throughout the duration of the interview will be

stored separately in a locked office at the Australian National University. Digitally recorded media (audio or visual) and data entered onto a computer will be kept in a computer accessible only by password by Robert Guth.

5. I understand that although any comments I make will not be attributed to me in any publication; it is possible that others may guess the source of information, and I should avoid disclosing information which is of confidential status or which is defamatory of any person or organisation.

6. I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage, without providing any reason and that this will not have any adverse consequences for me. If I withdraw, the information I provide will not be used by the project.

7. In any publications produced as a result of this research I consent to be identified by (check one):

- My full name
- My position and organisation (if you tick this box it is possible that you could be identified)
- None of the above (complete confidentiality)

Signed Date

Photography/Video/Audio

I consent to be recorded by the interviewer. I understand that documentation of this kind raises the likelihood of being identified.

Signed.....Date.....

Researcher to Complete

I certify that I have explained the nature and procedures of the research project to and consider that she/he understands what is involved.

Signed Date

Appendix D

Collected ephemera and articles from *Art-Is-An Bread*

All of the ephemera relates to specific events. The categories included the materials I created as well as responses from the press and individuals.

The Front edition of *Art-Is-An Bread*.

Three items:

A4 Flyer used for display on university and public notice boards and at the venue before the event.

Thread from The-RiotACT local online forum available at: <http://the-riotact.com/art-is-an-bread/24735>

Article from Local ABC website, available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/07/23/2962650.htm>

Art-Is-An Bread at The Front.

Friday 23 to Sunday 25
The Front Café and Gallery

It's like breathing.

Flour in; bread out.
Stuff in; bread out.
Money in; stuff out.
Flour in; money out.

Robert Guth will channel the souls of the former baker tenants of The Front Café and Gallery in Lyneham, Canberra by setting up his first Art-Is-An Bread baking installation in that location for three days, from Friday 23rd to Sunday 25th July. During that time he will bake half a ton (500kg) of artisan sourdough.



How do you get some? Well, what is bread worth to you? A toaster or tea cup, salad or an old TV? Maybe another loaf of bread? Or a bunch of carrots? Perhaps even some art?

Whatever you think a loaf of bread is worth, bring it in and swap it for a loaf of sourdough Art-Is-An Bread. The stuff you bring to swap will then be offered to others at the event, in exchange for a voluntary donation. It's a simple transmutation – Bread turns into stuff, stuff turns into money, money turns into paying expenses.

Why is this happening? Robert makes work that encourages the viewer to think about the value of their time, stuff, and money. He likes baking bread and has found a way to use his passion as part of his PhD at the ANU School of art. This artwork is part of his research into how participants (people who like bread) value objects and participation. You may be documented and chatted to when you come down for your bread.

If you don't come what will Robert do with 500 loaves of bread?

Art-Is-An-Bread

TAGGED [art](#), [artisan bread](#), [baking](#), [bread](#), [the front](#)

By Sunbeam 24 July, 2010 8

23 July, 2010 to 25 July, 2010



[Photos by 'Pling']

[First filed: Jul 20, 2010 @ 9:58]

[UPDATE: The bread is truly sensational! Popped in last night!]

I'm intrigued to see this event coming up, this weekend, at the Front.

As a student who recently finished her phd in political science (which was a feral and evil, hard slog – something I would recommend to no one) I "adore" that this is a part of an art student's phd process... a part of me wishes I'd done my phd in art, not pol sci. but then, I'd've never been creative enough to come up with something like this.

I wonder if he'll swap a loaf for my recently acquired graduation ceremony program...



Adv

F

#5
Jivrashia
4:22 pm, 25 Jul 10

Since this is still in action at the said place I thought I'd comment...

I have to admit failure on my part for not reading this article properly, and stopping by at the place as an afterthought. The people hanging around the place advised me that Robert was not really interested in a gold coin donation (or the Queen) but something else, preferably of value.

Of value? To whom? To me? To him? To someone else?

I walked back to the car and looked in the boot where the groceries laid. Cookies, bottle of red wine, detergent, tea, casserole meat, shaving cream, all the kind of stuff that an urban guy requires to survive. But none of them have any significant value... (monetary, yes, but I wouldn't miss them should they be stolen. So, no real value to me).

Although I wanted to try out these huge sour dough bread, moral dilemma kicked in and I was too embarrassed to try to exchange it for something that could be seen as inappropriate. In the end, after going through the complete inventory within my car (my car being excluded from consideration) I concluded that I had nothing of value and decided to leave.

So, what did Rioters themselves offer in exchange for Robert's sour dough?

#6
I-fled
10:37 pm, 25 Jul 10

Jivrashia @5 you should perhaps have chatted to the artist rather than the "people hanging around". Did you check out the shelf of exchanges? There's a can of cat food there! Absolutely "things of monetary value" isn't a requisite - I think he meant "things of value to you". I exchanged a ridiculous little item worth 10c, but one I'm attached to. Had I chosen to offer nothing, I could have. It's a thesis on exchange ... not a market stall or swap shop. Do go back and get some bread, it's just beautiful. So delicious that I cut all the crust off mine, dried out the middle for breadcrumbs, and had eaten the entire crust within in 24 hours

Big kudos to the artist, too, for photographing only the middle section of participants, and not requiring their faces to go online. He's really focused on what matters.

#7
chow
10:07 am, 26 Jul 10

Jivrashia, thank you for putting so much thought into the process. Sorry I was too busy at the time to explain what was going on. I've left a few loaves at the Front and will be going in this afternoon, I'll get them to leave one aside for you if you want to pick it up today. If you don't collect tomorrow it will be toast, or at least someone else's lunch.

I-fled, you are correct, it is all about "things of value to you." The only reason the process works is that I'm un-judgmental about the trade. Enjoy the breadcrumbs.

Look towards possible Tuggeranong and Belconnen editions.

Sorry to all for being terse and not particularly entertaining in my post here. After successfully making the 500kg of bread with no major burns or injuries my brain and half of my fingers (oven shenanigans of last night did claim one) are all pleading reduced responsibilities.

#8
Jivrashia
9:46 pm, 26 Jul 10

Thanks for the offer chow, but unfortunately I wasn't able to read your post @7 until now.

I'll probably come for the Tuggeranong or Belconnen edition, and this time I'll come with something in tow. 😊

I-fled. You just summed it up by saying "but one I'm attached to". 10 cents or not, it is a valuable thing, at least to you. I honestly could not think up one even after spending some time rummaging around my house. Not sure what that says about myself... An eye for an eye, a bread for a bread perhaps??

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Article from Local ABC website,
available at: <http://www.abc.net.au/local/stories/2010/07/23/2962650.htm>

23 July, 2010 4:32PM AEDT

Someone's gotta make the dough!

By [Melanie Tait](#)

Canberra artist Robert Guth combines his two passions: art and food.

Walk through the door of the Front Gallery in Lyneham and expect to be covered in flour by the time you live.

It's not because the gallery has decided to branch into bread making, it's because the latest art installation is a delicious combination of art and food.

Robert Guth is a Canberra School of Art Phd student as well as a frustrated baker. He loves making bread; he loves mixing it together, kneading with his hands, serving it to his friends.

The main inspiration behind this project was so he could remind himself what hard work making food is, lest he decide in a weak moment to open a cafe.

How the project works is like this: Robert bakes about half a tonne of sourdough and asks the people of Canberra to bring in an item they think is worth a loaf of bread. It's an old fashioned barter system, with an artistic bent.

When you come into drop off your item-worth-a-piece-of-bread, Robert takes a picture of you with your bread and item (body shot, no faces). In a few months time, Robert will have a brand spanking piece of art using the photos and items.

So far, all sorts of things have been dropped in. Among the treasures are several books, home grown food, a bike light, a stencil from another artist, jam and even a loaf of bread from a rival bread-maker.

"Someone has just given me a huge pile of plastic bags so that people can take their bread home. They could see a need that people are looking for plastic bags to take their loaves of bread home."

By the end of the weekend, Robert hopes to have in excess of 1000 items.

"People love it. People love food. People love eating and they like the idea that they get to choose what food is worth to them."

And the bread? Consensus here at the ABC is that it's delicious... especially with a slathering of creamy butter.



Robert Guth in the art bakery, surrounded by his work.
(Melanie Tait - ABC Local)

Boorowa edition of *Art-Is-An Bread*

Four items:

Press release for Boorowa News and other outlets via show society

Flyer used for distribution in Boorowa via show society

Newspaper article with portion about *Art-Is-An Bread* highlighted 3/3/2011

Cover and extracts from the show program that reference *Art-Is-An Bread*

PRESS RELEASE

Art-Is-An Bread – Boorowa Edition.

What happens in this art-work is very simple.

I move a very basic bread baking set up into a space - a shop or gallery. Then for three days I bake and give people the opportunity to take home a loaf of fresh sourdough bread.

In exchange for the bread I ask people to give me anything they think a loaf of bread might be worth. I never question what they offer in exchange. They get the bread and I get the item. As part of the process they are photographed with the bread and their swap item. Some of the photographs are displayed at other events. At a later date the objects and photographs will be sold as art-works.

What is a loaf of bread worth?

It's really interesting and entertaining to see what people are willing to swap for a loaf of bread; I have received everything from poems to a blood pressure meter. Beyond showing individual diversity of how things are valued, I hope that this work does something to address the growing divide between the food we eat and where it comes from.

Wheat leaves Boorowa at about forty cents a kilo and ends up being bread in a swank bakery café in the city sold for ten dollars a kilo. This art-work hopes to show at least part of the connection between the farmer and suit wearing Consumer.

When I make this work in cities, it exposes the human face and the labour that goes into at least part of the food chain from farm to consumer. When making this work in Boorowa I'm bringing one of the highly valued end products back to where it came from. It's like the wool jumpers that are worn around here.

I can't explain to people why bread like mine is worth \$10 a kilo in the city. Just like I can't explain to office workers why anyone would chose to work with their hands as a baker or a farmer. Hopefully by giving bread to both and showing how it is valued I can bring them a bit closer together

ART – IS – AN BREAD BOOROWA



What is a freshly baked loaf of bread worth to you?

Whatever it is come and swap it for a loaf of hot out of the oven, baked on site, sourdough Art-Is-An Bread.

For two days before in the Main Street and in the pavilion on show day we will be swapping bread for what every you

think it's worth.

Why is this happening? Well it's art and part of a PhD project at the ANU School of Art.

If this sounds interesting but makes no sense contact Robert Guth. Robert.guth@anu.edu.au or 0428 458866.

Boorowa News

Thursday, March 3, 2011

\$1.40*
GST Inclusive

IT'S SHOW TIME!

There will be something for everyone at this year's Boorowa Show on Saturday with the traditional show favourites combined with a number of new and exciting exhibits on offer.

The show has continued to grow and prosper since it was first held in 1887 and this year it will be officially opened by local identity Peg Merriman.

The feature section of the show is Fruit and Vegetables which will attract some fierce competition to see who will take out the Hawk Hill Trophy for Most Successful Exhibitor in Junior Classes as well as prizes in a number of open classes such as the biggest pumpkin.

The Central West NSW councils (CENTROC) has teamed up with the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority to create a travelling Carbon Expo at the show where residents will be able to learn first-hand about climate adaptation and the impacts of climate change.

There will also be talks about worm farming, composting, backyard vegetable growing and sustainable agricultural practices.

Australian National University PhD student Robert Guth will bring something different to this year show with a twist on the traditional art

show.

He will be swapping freshly baked bread for whatever the public believes it is worth, using the information to form his PhD project.

Mr Guth encourages everyone to bring along something to swap or trade for a loaf and get involved in this unique exhibit.

He will be present baking his loaves and trading today and tomorrow at the Pantry on Pudman coffee shop before he moves his ovens and display to the showground on Saturday to continue with the project.

A first time addition to the show is the Team Yarding competition, one of the fastest growing sports on horseback where teams of three have 90 seconds to draft and yard three beasts from a mob of 21.

It will be held on Sunday at the showground with canteen and camping available.

It starts at 9:30am and is \$15 for a junior team and \$50 for an open team.

The show kicks off on Saturday with the popular shearing competition, with shearers battling it out in either the open, intermediate, senior, local or learners event.

There is also the Boorowa Merino

Breeders Association 'Quick Shear' event.

A favourite exhibit over the past years has been the display of vintage engines and they will again be at this year's show with judging and awards.

Commercial exhibitors showing their wares include horse shoe nail figures, food stalls, Enjo cleaning products, McDonald Farm Trees, Murringo Ironworks and Riverina Scooters and Mobility.

Children will be entertained throughout the day with the Darling Downs Zoo Reptiles, Funtime Puppet Theatre, local singers and free face painting.

Also, don't miss out on the chance to see the alpacas, cattle, stud and commercial, Australian and British breed sheep, poultry and caged birds, yard dog trials and the Sheep Flock Ewe Competition display.

The dog show, along with sheep and pavilion judging will be held tomorrow.

Celebrate all things country at the Boorowa Show this Saturday at the showground from 8:30am to 5pm.

Entry is free for school children and a family pass for two adults and their school aged children is only \$20, with a \$5 entry fee for pensioners.



Long time exhibitor Robert Guth's patch. These pumpkins will be featured in the Fruit and Vegetables Section at this year's Boorowa Show the heaviest exhibited pumpkin at the

Boorowa Show Society 122nd Annual

Friday, Saturday & Sunday 4th, 5th & 6th March

Feature Section

Friday: Dog Championship Show
Sheep Pavilion
Pavilion judging

Saturday: MAIN SHOW DAY
Official opening at 2pm by
Mrs Peg Merriman
Sheep Show Awards
Flock Ewe Competition.
Awards
Grand Parade

Sunday: Team Yarding

WHAT'S' NEW:
FRUIT & VEGETABLES
CENTROC Display
ART-IS-AN-BREAD



Anna Corcoran
Representative
of the
Boorowa
Show

- Sheep (British)
- Stud and Com
- Chooks, Ducks
- Art for all ages
- The Popular Ph
- Many Cooking
- ASC Rich Fruit
- Beautiful Boor
- Shearing for a
- Merino Junior
- Vintage Engine
and many vari
- Buy prize win
- U Beaut Ute

Show Office situated at Court House Arts and Craft

OPENING HOURS: 10am - 5pm, Monday, Feb 23 Until Tuesday, March 10. Also Saturday, Feb 26

For enquiries contact Narelle Nixon on 0427 070 341

**BOOROWA SHOW
SOCIETY & DISTRICT'S**

*122nd
Annual Show
2011*

Saturday 5th March

Dog Show, Sheep & Pavilion Judging
Friday 4th March

Team Yarding - Sunday 6th March

*THIS YEAR'S
FEATURE SECTION:*
Vegies & Fruit

*Superb
Parrot
Country*



**Gold
Coin
Donation**



**PRESIDENT'S
REPORT**

At the time of going to print our President is "Flooded In", and is unable to get his report to us.

We know, however, that he would want to welcome you all to our 2011 Show.

We have some exciting new exhibits. Centroc, in conjunction with LMCA will be there with practical ideas to help us deal with climate change, and Robert Guth has a novel Art project, exchanging freshly baked loaves of bread for whatever you think it is worth. You will also catch him downtown for the two days prior to the Show.

These make great additions to all the regular favourites!

As always, the Show would not happen without all the volunteers, and I know Michael would wish to thank them for their untiring efforts.

Michael K Corkhill
President

(Per Dianne Hopkirk)

ART – IS – AN BREAD BOOROWA
What is a freshly baked loaf of bread worth to you?



Whatever it is come and swap it for a loaf of hot out of the oven, baked on site, sourdough Art-Is-An Bread.

For two days before in the Main Street and in the pavilion on show day we will be swapping bread for what every you think it's worth.

Why is this happening? Well it's art, part of a PhD project at the ANU and everybody likes bread.

If this sounds interesting but makes no sense contact Robert Guth at Robert.guth@anu.edu.au or 0428 458866.

The *You Are Here* edition of *Art-Is-An Bread*.

Five items:

Thread from RiotACT preceding the event, available at: <http://the-riotact.com/art-is-an-bread-civic-edition/39244>

Thread from RiotACT during the event, available at: <http://the-riotact.com/bread-to-be-had-in-civic/40317>

Citynews article from, 24-30/3/2011

Canberra Times article from, 13/4/2011

Thread I posted from Sourdough.com describing my baking process, available at: <http://sourdough.com/forum/swapping-bread-stuff>

Art-Is-An BREAD Civic Edition

TAGGED [art is an bread](#), [bread](#), [Robert Guth](#), [sourdough](#)
 By johnboy 2 March, 2011 4

12 March, 2011 1:00 pm to 19 March, 2011 1:00 pm



Insanely talented bread maker (and all round nice guy) Robert Guth is bringing his fusion of art and delicious bread to Civic for the [You Are Here Festival](#).

He had this to say about it:

Who does not like BREAD? Well, there are the gluten intolerant wheat haters – but other than that most people.

The question though is just HOW MUCH you like BREAD. What are you willing to trade for a loaf of Fresh Sourdough ART-IS-AN BREAD? Hand crafted BREAD that is made with an eighteen hour process. BREAD that in other situations would sell for ten bucks a kilo. BREAD that is part craft part art.

From Saturday the 12th of March till Saturday the 19th of March you have to opportunity to show the world. You can swap your "STUFF" for BREAD.

Bring whatever you think a loaf bread is worth down to the SmithDick venue in the bus interchange and swap it. It's up to you – a toaster or tea cup, an old TV or maybe even a piece of art. We wont question your sense of value, if you say it's worth BREAD then it is worth BREAD.

Besides the joy of BREAD why is this happening? Why is this art not a bakery? Robert makes artworks that encourages the viewer to think about the value of their time, stuff and money. He likes baking bread and has found a way to use his passion as part of his art making and PhD project at the ANU School of Art. This artwork is part of his research in to how participants (people who like BREAD) value objects and participation. You may be documented and chatted to when you come down for your BREAD.

There will only be a limited number of loaves (more than 15 less than 50) produced every day. The first batch will come out of the ovens around 1pm in time for the Close Listening concert.

We had a brief report on Robert's previous similar venture at The Front back in [last July](#).

Robert's also doing his thing in Boorowa at The Pantry on Pudman this weekend if you're out that way.

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4 Responses to *Art-Is-An BREAD Civic Edition*

#1

Nicolej

10:28 am, 02 Mar 11

This looks amazing! What a fabulous idea. What I like is that it makes you think about the value of the item your bringing, and the value of the bread. Also I just like good bread. The supermarket stuff is soul destroying. Once you have good bread it's hard to go back.

#2

bugirl

2:05 pm, 03 Mar 11

Aaaah good bread....I remember you well...Unfortunately, I am one of those gluten-intolerantarians. Why meeeeeee??

#3

EvanJames

2:41 pm, 03 Mar 11

Can you swap a \$5 note for some BREAD?
...anyone remember Vogels? Now that was bread.

#4

chow

4:57 pm, 06 Mar 11

You can find out a bit more on local ABC breakfast radio around 6:45am tomorrow (Monday) morning. Hopefully there will also be a bit about how the event at the Boorowa show went on Saturday.

Bread to be had in Civic!

TAGGED [art is an bread](#), [bread](#), [Robert Guth](#), [You are here](#)

By johnboy 14 March, 2011 11



Robert Guth is a bread maker so good it's part of the phd he's doing. Hopefully that will help you understand what a gift one of his loaves is.

And you can have one, all you have to do is take something in to the old site of the Dick Smith in the bus interchange.

It's really simple, grab something you don't mind trading for a loaf of bread. I chose on old copy of The Economist.



Then walk into the You Are Here mothership on the corner of City Walk and East Row, ignore the women on rollerskates and other zaniness, walk up to Robert in his bakers overalls and give him your thing.



In exchange you get wonderful bread.



It's really that easy, you're contributing to art and a phd, you get rid of something, and you get a loaf of bread.

You'd be mad not to get down there in the next week it's running as part of [You Are Here](#).

[Post a comment](#)

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#1
Overheard
7:12 pm, 14 Mar 11
Oh, if you haven't tried this guy's bread, just do it. I'm an atheist, but after trying his bread, I started believing there's a god.....

#2
chow
9:40 am, 15 Mar 11
"Warning"
Today's bread is not a danger to anyone's belief structures.
We had a minor rise failure.
2/3rds the volume the same mass.
Into every life a little stodge must fall.
Tomorrow (Wednesday) we'll be back on track.
Robert

#3
EvanJames
12:58 pm, 15 Mar 11
If you don't have an old magazine to exchange, could you give them an old \$5 note you no longer need?

#4
chow
4:31 pm, 15 Mar 11
"Notice"
Things are looking back on track for tomorrows bake. Come on down from 12.
Thanks to those who came down today in spite of my warnings. I hope you enjoyed the bread.

#5
You gave him a magazine from **3 months ago?**
Cheapskate.



Skidbladnir
5:08 pm, 15 Mar 11

#6
Skidbladnir said:
"You gave him a magazine from **3 months ago?**
Cheapskate."



Johnboy
5:24 pm, 15 Mar 11

And a big plug.

#7
Pommy bastard
5:38 pm, 15 Mar 11
13 amp?

#8
chow
9:55 am, 16 Mar 11
The baking MOJO has returned. The loaves are looking great.

#9
astrojax
4:43 pm, 16 Mar 11
loaves look great [have to wait for astress to get home before i'm allowed to attack it - 's hard!] and robert was great to chat with as he takes your pic for his exhibition - hope he likes french literary genius...

#10
far_northact
6:27 pm, 16 Mar 11
I spent a good ten minutes at lunch time today analysing (through the window) what people have offered. There are some good things and some dodgy things. Someone had traded a loaf of bread, which is one thing, that I'm sure he has enough of...

#11
mousie15
7:05 pm, 17 Mar 11
Outstanding bread!!! Well worth the visit. 😊

feature

feature

Yes, but is it art?

Robert Guth has turned his passion for sourdough into a PhD into performance art. He tells **Natasha Rudra** and **Kirsten Lawson** how he did it

PhD topics are notoriously obscure, but this one might just take the cake. Canberra art student Robert Guth is two-and-a-half years into a doctorate that combines performance art and participatory art with making bread. Which basically means he makes huge quantities of sourdough bread and swaps it with passers-by for whatever they decide it's worth.

His latest bread swap was last month in the city centre, as part of the You Are Here Festival. Guth baked 370 loaves of bread over the week and as he handed out loaves, he received in return a bizarre and wide array of objects from the public, from a painstakingly drawn portrait of Guth to pots of jam and donations to charity. Books were a popular swap item, and some Canberraans brought in food to swap for the bread.

Others, slightly less idealistically, decided to get rid of junk lying around their home. Guth accepted everything with a cheerful smile and photographed each contributor with their item and a loaf of bread.

Guth has done other installations involving food, carrying notions of time and value and emotional

exchange and that's kind of sweet. Sometimes people tried to push the concept as far as it would go to see whether they could push Guth's limits at the same time. "There was a guy who came in with a dirty used takeaway fork which he wanted to swap," Guth recalls. "[It] was fine by me, so long as he thinks it's worth a loaf of bread. And he was hanging out with a couple of cute girls and he obviously wanted to try and impress them. So he got his value and I got my anecdote, as well as the fork which I can then offer as an object of art."

Public servants Sarah Samios and Rich Pelyni brought Guth a small Tarrax puzzle to swap for a loaf of bread. Samios said the couple decided to take part "because it makes amazing bread and it's an interesting experiment". She said they spent a little bit of time thinking about what to bring. "I came out earlier in the week and I brought the day's crop of figs from my fig tree. [Rich] brought a puzzle because he likes puzzles."

All the items – from the Tarrax (brand new in its box) to the used takeaway fork – will eventually be sold in an art auction which Guth says is the next evolution of his work.

"It's made people stop and think about what a loaf of bread is worth to them and worth to others, whether it's looking at the table full of stuff through the window or if it's people who are coming in and making an exchange."

You'll find Guth's own post about his bread swap at <http://sourdough.com/forum/swapping-bread-stuff>.



Robert Guth left, and You Are Here Festival coordinator Nick McCormison with items swapped for bread in the latest edition of Guth's bread-swap artwork. Photo: Stuart Wainmory

among the objects he was given. "After a while it comes home just how ridiculous this concept is, that these are all equivalents," he says. "In this world, that television is worth as much as that can of Coke or the blown up glove with the postcard stuck on the back and mounted on a packet of Indomie. Then you get the people who have obviously thought about it in terms of time and value and emotional

exchange and that's kind of sweet. Sometimes people tried to push the concept as far as it would go to see whether they could push Guth's limits at the same time. "There was a guy who came in with a dirty used takeaway fork which he wanted to swap," Guth recalls. "[It] was fine by me, so long as he thinks it's worth a loaf of bread. And he was hanging out with a couple of cute girls and he obviously wanted to try and impress them. So he got his value and I got my anecdote, as well as the fork which I can then offer as an object of art."

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Photo: Stuart Wainmory

will know. But Guth says this is part of the classic idea of performance art as "an artist doing something mildly self-destructive repetitively for an extended period of time". He points to the Australian artist Stella, whose performance art involves suspending himself from hooks in the flesh. "What are you offering of value?" Guth asks. "If you have an artist like Stella suspending himself on meat hooks, one of the things he's offering is his pain." Guth isn't going so far, but his efforts to produce and giveaway vast quantities of bread are exploring a similar idea – that the artist is offering something of value.

And so to the question on everyone's lips: is it art? Guth says his PhD is all about "examining the use of hospitality to cause engagement in participatory art". While there's lots of work done on the norms of hospitality (the act of giving or offering), and reciprocity and the social contract, these issues are not much discussed when it comes to participatory art. And yet, hospitality is at the core.

He was inspired to bake by childhood neighbour and partner Bruno Ehrenberger, the owner of Mawson bakery Bruno's Truffles.

Guth makes what he describes as a standard long-fermentation white sourdough, with his own starter made of flour, water, oil, salt, and honey. For a 500g loaf, he uses 50g of starter. In the latest "edition" of the artwork, each loaf was numbered and labelled "Art-Is-An Bread". It's the sort of rustic bread you would pay \$8 for at an organic farmer's market, a world fully called "white death" loaves from the supermarket.

When you consider the used takeaway fork, maybe his reluctance is understandable.

Continued Page 4

Continued Page 4

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Borne and bread for art

Even the artist thinks it's weird. ELERI HARRIS tries to get her head around an academic art project that involves baking and bartering loaves

BEARING bread and bearded, artist Robert Guth bakes 40 loaves a day in white overalls while his PhD is gathering momentum.

"In many ways the whole idea is weird," he says. "But, once I eliminated anything truly ridiculous, this was what was left."

Entering the final phase of "Art-is-an-Bread", a participatory artwork project involving strangers swapping stuff for sourdough, Guth has just finished a week-long residency at the You are Here festival in Civic's old Dick Smith shop.

"It comes from wanting to make participatory artworks that use food. I wanted to keep using food and feed people, I didn't want to use it symbolically, deny access or waste food," Guth says.

"There are people who swap food for food, there are people who swap bric-a-brac for food and there are people who swap things of sentimental value for food.

"Many of them are about the trade, not the objects. So there's



Canberra artist Robert Guth... "I'd say there were a lot less smart arses in Boorowa." Photo by Silas

the ocker Aussie who came in, had a look around, went out, came back with a fishing rod, which fitted his personality perfectly. There's the sheep stud owner who swapped 25grams of some of the best wool in Australia.

"There's the woman who's had

breast cancer and a mastectomy and she's just handed me a bra and gone: 'Here you are, I don't need this any more!'"

The fresh food he is given just gets eaten "because I couldn't figure out any way to preserve the fresh food."

By the end of the week Guth want-

ed 500 objects, 500 photos of people holding bread and their object, and the basis for his doctorate at ANU's School of Art, looking at how people value objects and participation.

"The objects will be re-exhibited alongside photographs of the person at my graduating show for my PhD," Guth explains.

"They'll be offered at a silent auction, so we'll see what these objects are worth when they enter the art economy."

Guth has also swapped bread for stuff at The Front in Lyneham and the Boorowa Show and he says country folks are a bit different.

"I'd say there were a lot less smart arses in Boorowa," Guth says.

"A much greater consideration on the actual value of a loaf of bread, as opposed to the conceptual value of an art project."

An exhibition of Guth's objects and images will be held at the ANU School of Art in late 2011, after that he says he will become a professional baker.

"I might go work in a bakery for six months to hone my skills, because I make a great loaf of bread, but there's things I could learn from industry," Guth says in all seriousness.

"Making 50 kilos a day is my limit, it's well below commercial, but when I'm performance cooking I can do 150 kilos a day."

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Swapping Bread for Stuff

[view](#) [edit](#)

by [Chow](#) · [More by this author](#) { 2011 March 31 }

Swapping Stuff for bread, as Art what do bakers and makers think of this?

This started as a comment on this thread: <http://sourdough.com/blog/sonoma-miche-sydney> relating to chilling dough. Since it grew out of proportion so I've started this thread instead.

For background and photos of the bread and events in question you can look on the following websites:

<http://youareherecanberra.com.au/?p=1021>

<http://the-riotact.com/bread-to-be-had-in-civic/40317>

http://issuu.com/CityNews/docs/110324_citynews/11

For those of you who use face book there are some photos here.

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?id=128244673910673&aid=27895>

While I bake regularly for my family and friends the only times I really get to get on a roll baking is when I'm engaged in on of my bread swap artworks. You can read about the first one here (<http://sourdough.com/forum/bread-stamps>) from the photos in that thread you can see my portable rig and what people swap for bread.

In that edition the only chilling I used was to hold some dough at bulk proof overnight so I could have the luxury of sleeping in till 5am, driving to the gallery and producing continuous batches of bread all day. After all my goal was 500kg in three days.

Since then I've done the event twice with differing levels of refrigeration. The first time in Boorowa NSW in conjunction with their annual agricultural show. Country people are morning people so I wanted to get the baking done by 3pm. Here I used a friends cool room to both retard the bulk dough as well as the first couple sets of loaves to go through the oven. It worked pretty well overall, on the busiest day there was a batch that got over proofed at the final stage but because I was using raising baskets it was ok.

Most recently I presented an edition in the CBD of Canberra. Because of building regulations I was not allowed to move my baking gear on site so I was left baking at home. I also limited myself to just 48 loaves a day (two bakes in my oven). I wanted to fine down the time input for the bread making as much as possible as the bulk of my day from was spent on site in a white Tyvek jumpsuit being bouncy and engaging with the audience. For this work I bulk proofed at room temperature all day, shaped the loaves in the afternoon/evening and left them on open trays (under plastic) in my coolroom overnight.

This is how my day was structured:

7:45 start heating oven. Between now and 9:00 mix the two batches of dough for the next days loaves and the starter

for the following day.

8:00 put the first batch of 24 loaves in the oven

8:40 rotate the trays

9:00 take the loaves out and put the second batch in. Between now and 10:15 clean up, prepare packaging, eat breakfast and have a shower

9:40 rotate the trays bag first lot of bread

10:00 take out the second lot. 10:15 pack second lot load up car and head in to uni

10:30 check emails, sort my academic problems keep degree on track and pick up a driver to get my car from the venue to a car park after unloading

11:30 arrive at venue and unpack, grab a coffee and have a briefing with the festival organisers and other artists.

12:00 doors open and bread swapping starts.

16:00-17:00 Finish up for the day.

Some time before bed shape the loaves and put them in the cool room overnight. Also put the starter in the cool room.

When the shaping got done was dependent on what other things were going on and the weather. I had one batch of over proofed dough on a particularly warm day but after that lifted my game and was more careful. I was lucky as well most of the days were in the mid 20's. The last day was cold so I had to get up early and let the formed loaves warm up for a couple of hours before baking. I'm not sure if it made much difference but I was expecting a food writer that day so I put in the extra effort. Those loaves looked like this:



I'm sorry to say I don't have a photo of the crumb at this point but I can solve that problem tomorrow hopefully. It is an even structure that will not drop honey on one's beard or cloths when used.

The following recipe is more or less the loaf in the photo. sorry, I have not converted it to bakers percentages, it's from my cheat sheet next to the mixer.

3kg 1:1 ripe starter (chilled)

11kg Manildra bakers flour

1kg Allied Mills wholemeal flour

6.3 litres water (temperature dependent on the day between 10-20degrees)

130g salt

130g honey

130g olive oil

The mixer used is a single speed 30 litre spiral mixer.

First mix: Combine water, starter, wholemeal honey and oil. No rest

Second mix: Add white flour and mix for 7 minutes Rest for 4 minutes

Third mix: Add salt and mix for 7 minutes Remove into 60 litre bulk tub proof for between 8 to 12 hours dependent on the day.

Make up loaves to 870g Boules Put on baking trays in coolroom with plastic over for 10-16 hours. Bake at 200 degrees for 55-60 minutes.

There are some questions I would like to put to the Hive mind that inhabits this well leavened place.

Does this project interest you as bread makers? Do you care what people think a loaf of bread is worth?

Technically does my method of making bread seem reasonable to you?

From this test bed what should or could happen? I've been doing this work as part of my PhD research, since I'm on scholarship I consider my expenses as a way of directly giving back to the Australian tax payer who has been good enough to support me for three years.

I'm curious about the increased interest in people about sourdough. Besides the increase in baking workshops what other ways have people been spreading the word? I'd also be interested in what a lesson plan from Sourdough workshops. I can't afford to start paying to go along just to satisfy my curiosity about how to teach people about Sourdough.

Bake Well, Chow

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Swapping Bread for stuff

by [HopesHope](#) · [More by this author](#) { 2011 September 24 }

I've been "swapping bread for stuff" for awhile now, here, where I live. I swap at the health food store, taxi for fares, and the beauty salon for haircuts and products.

It works out well... I save money...

In the old days, swapping bread for stuff, use to be called "bartering."

I think it's awesome that people can swap things. for good bread, If I sell my bread which I do from time to time, I dont' sell it at an expensive price, I make it affordable for all to have if they choose to.

Appendix E

Gift art-work made as part of participating in the Openspace Kassel residential workshop. Held to coincide with Documenta XII in 2007 in Kassel 2007.



Money raised from passing the hat amongst campers with a starting float of 14 EUR with the instruction to put something in or take something out depending on if they were happy with the week. The collection would be gratefully accepted and faithfully applied for the unknown people who had to clean up their shit everyday.

Total given: 43 EUR, 10 DEM, 6 SGD, some TWD coinage, some GBP coinage, a pen, a 2 day pass to Documenta, a cigarette, a pile of small stained note paper, a small ruler with pigs on it, a business card and Openspace vouchers.

