

# Food & Performance

A Study Room Guide on eating and dining as explored in performance



a Gorge Project  
Compiled & written by I'm With You  
2016



Live Art  
Development  
Agency

## **LADA Study Room Guides**

As part of the continuous development of the Study Room we regularly commission artists and thinkers to write personal Study Room Guides on specific themes.

The idea is to help navigate Study Room users through the resource, enable them to experience the materials in a new way and highlight materials that they may not have otherwise come across.

All Study Room Guides are available to view in our Study Room, or can be viewed and/or downloaded directly from their Study Room catalogue entry.

Please note that materials in the Study Room are continually being acquired and updated. For details of related titles acquired since the publication of this Guide search the online Study Room catalogue with relevant keywords and use the advance search function to further search by category and date.

Cover image: Christa Holka



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## Introduction

This is a guide.

Chewed over, mulled, partially digested, partly regurgitated, somewhere between impeccable taste and shocking tastelessness. This is a study guide on food and performance, commissioned by the Live Art Development Agency and produced by I'm With You. I'm With You is a performance producing collaboration between the artist-researchers Season Butler, Christa Holka, R. Justin Hunt, and Johanna Linsley, and a host of associated artists. Since 2009, I'm With You has presented events that question a relationship between publics and queerness. This guide comes out of a project I'm With You has been conducting since 2014 called Gorge (like gorge yourself silly, until the gorge rises, and like: that's gorge, babes). Gorge, in turn, comes out of our ongoing interest in queer domesticity, and the public/private/social/economic/etc. anxieties, possibilities and problems that entails.

This guide is unfinished, if not completely raw. It includes an annotated index, two pieces of longer analysis, and a photo-essay which proceeds from and operates as ingredients and/or recipes for Gorge research. We specifically focus here on food, eating, and dining as they have been explored in artist performance, while acknowledging that this is an area where performance/not-performance is a particularly blurry line. Key entry points for us have been: post-war North American and European avant-garde investigations of everyday life; food as a tactic for performance activism; food at the intersection of cultural identities; desire, disgust and other social, psychological and physiological modes of excess. The Gorge project is specifically inspired by the kitchen in Mervyn Peake's *Ghormenghast* trilogy – a sweaty, treacherous, subterranean zone – and a certain Gothic sensibility has guided our inquiry.

There are a number of areas we have not approached in this guide. We have not included in the index anthropological, philosophical, psychoanalytic or critical theory approaching food and taste (such as Claude Levi-Strauss's *The Raw and the Cooked*, Julia Kristeva's *The Power of Horror*, Roland Barthes' 'Reading Brillat-Savarin' among many, many others). We have not included the genre of food writing (though MFK Fisher's *How to Cook a Wolf* and Alice B. Toklas's *Murder in the Kitchen* have been inspirations), or popular media performances of food (though the spirit of Nigella Lawson is never too far away). For a rigorous overview of food as cultural performance, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett's work is masterful, complex and wide-ranging – visit her staff page at New York University for a list of her work in this field: <https://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/web/>. In the UK, a number of performance scholars are doing essential work on food cultures and performance, including Josh Abrams (Central School of Speech and Drama), Jenny Lawson (University of Leeds), and Paul Geary (University of Birmingham).

To use this guide:

- 1) Find resources from the Live Art Development Agency's Study Room via our selective index.
- 2) Engage with analytic content derived from Study Room resources.
- 3) Consume the Photo Essay in courses or as a buffet.

Optional: ignore this recipe. Throw everything into a salad spinner and deep-fry it.

Reference Note: Reference numbers in the Index refer to specific performances. LADA may hold more materials on these artists.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Abramović, Marina	<i>The Onion</i>	1996	<a href="https://youtu.be/BFFb5iDVFx8">https://youtu.be/BFFb5iDVFx8</a>	A video work in which Abramović faces the camera and makes herself cry by rubbing a raw onion in her eyes. The materiality of the onion complicates the representational force of the tears, which are at once signals of authentic emotion and virtuosic acting.
Anderson, Patrick	<i>So Much Wasted: Hunger, Performance and the Morbidity of Resistance</i>	2010	P2981	From the Duke University Press description: 'In <i>So Much Wasted</i> , Patrick Anderson analyzes self-starvation as a significant mode of staging political arguments across the institutional domains of the clinic, the gallery, and the prison. Homing in on those who starve themselves for various reasons and the cultural and political contexts in which they do so, he examines the diagnostic history of anorexia nervosa, fasts staged by artists including Ana Mendieta and Marina Abramović, and a hunger strike initiated by Turkish prisoners.'

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Antin, Eleanor	<i>Carving: A Traditional Sculpture</i>	1972	P2383	<p>From the Art Institute of Chicago description: 'A landmark early feminist work, Eleanor Antin's <i>Carving: A Traditional Sculpture</i> comprises 148 black-and-white photographs documenting the artist's loss of 10 pounds over 37 days. Every morning she was photographed naked in the same four stances to record her barely perceptible self-induced weight loss. (The photographs from each day are arranged vertically, and the entire process can be read horizontally, like a filmstrip.) Antin's performance purposely toyed with the traditional process of Greek sculptors, who were said to find their ideal form by chipping away at a block of marble and discarding any unnecessary material. The artist's idea of 'carving' her own body was inspired by an invitation from the Whitney Museum of Art for its biennial survey exhibition, which at the time restricted itself to the established categories of painting and sculpture, though this work was considered too conceptual for the exhibition'.</p>

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Antoni, Janine	<i>Lick and Lather</i>	1993	P0822	Two sculptures inspired by classical self-portraiture taking the form of formal busts. Antoni made a mold of her own features and cast it in chocolate and soap. She re-molded her image by licking the chocolate and bathing with the soap.
Araniello, Katherine	<i>Dinner Party Revisited</i>	2014	P2390, P2775	From Unlimited (who supported the project): 'In a twist on a 1920s comedy sketch in which an elderly woman hosts a celebration dinner for the friends she has outlived, live art performance, The Dinner Party Revisited, sees the artist play host to six television monitor "guests", all played by Araniello. Their unscripted interactions with her live presence and her alcohol infused butler form a satirical and darkly comic take on some of the clichés around disability'.
Artaud, Antonin	<i>The Pursuit of Fecality</i>	1947	<a href="http://bit.ly/29yvmK8">http://bit.ly/29yvmK8</a>	A section from Antonin Artaud's radio play <i>Pour en Finir avec le Jugement de dieu (To Have Done with the Judgement of God)</i> . The piece was recorded but not aired in Artaud's lifetime. The first lines of 'The Pursuit of Fecality' read: 'There where it smells of shit/ it smells of being.'



Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Ashery, Oreet and Larissa Sansour	<i>Falafel Road Residency</i>	2010	P1291	<p>The <i>Falafel Road Residency</i> was a programme of events and talks that responded to and extended from The Novel of Nonel and Vovel, a graphic novel created in a collaboration between Oreet Ashery and Larissa Sansour. The programme was supported by the Live Art Development Agency. From the project page: 'Ashery and Sansour's <i>Falafel Road Residency</i> is exploring manifestations of the falafel as a Diasporic food that has been assimilated into London's rich food culture, and as a well contested national symbol in the Near East. Throughout the <i>Falafel Road Residency</i> Sansour and Ashery will continue to address forms of cultural colonialism in relation to the Middle East through the outlandish and irregular means they have begun to develop in their book.' The project was inspired, in part, by Gordon Matta-Clark's <i>Food</i> (see below).</p>
Atiku, Jelili	<i>The Feast Series</i>	2012	P1958	See <i>Jelili Atiku: The Feast Series</i> in this guide.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Baker, Bobby	<i>Cook Dems &amp; Table Occasions</i>	2000	D0964	See <i>Uncooking Your Meals</i> in this guide.
Boal, Augusto	<i>Invisible Theatre</i>	1979	P1745	This technique for social and political intervention in public space was initially developed by Boal in Buenos Aires with a group of actors aimed at creating a forum for discussing class consciousness within a restaurant. The theatre was 'invisible' because only the actors knew the situations they set up were staged. The details are described in Boal's book <i>Theatre of the Oppressed</i> .
Brecht, Bertold	<i>The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre'</i>	1930	P1755	Collected in <i>Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic</i> (1950). Brecht rejects what he terms 'culinary opera' in favour of the 'epic', which foregrounds the pedagogical and ideologically active over passive consumption and catharsis.
Brisley, Stuart	<i>Ten Days</i>	1973/78	EV0603	A performance that lasts ten days, over which Brisley is served elaborate meals with formal manners which he does not eat. The food is offered to visitors to the gallery, and anything which is not eaten is left to rot. In the final gesture of the performance Brisley ascends the tabletop and rolls among the waste. (film by Ken McCullen)

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Charmatz, Boris	<i>manger</i>	2014	P2980	French choreographer Charmatz relocates the site of dance to the mouth in this piece which is structured by the act of dancers chewing.
Chicago, Judy	<i>Dinner Party</i>	1974	P2265, P2495, P2644, P1867, P0373	This installation is an iconic second-wave feminist work. Chicago represents 1,039 historical women on her monumental dinner table, some via specially designed plates and the rest through inscribing their names on the table.
Childs, Lucinda	<i>Carnation</i>	1964	<a href="https://youtu.be/ukbGiRyB8n4">https://youtu.be/ukbGiRyB8n4</a>	The minimalist choreographer's 1964 solo involved the manipulation of kitchen utensils.
Conflict Kitchen	<i>Conflict Kitchen</i>	2010	P2266	A Pittsburg restaurant that serves food from nations the US is in conflict with. The restaurant, which is open seven days a week in the centre of the city, is also the occasion for public conversation about US foreign policy in a space of alternative social formation. Different versions of the kitchen have included food from Afghanistan, North Korea, Palestine, Iran, and Venezuela.
Curious (Helen Paris and Leslie Hill)	<i>On the Scent</i>	2003	A0047	'Performers who smell/on smell;' A performance for camera that includes a recipe for smelling the associated text. Instructions include snorting chillis and drinking tequila.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Delfina Foundation	The Politics of Food	2014-17	<a href="http://bit.ly/29xC71u">http://bit.ly/29xC71u</a>	A series of public programmes and international residencies in London exploring artists' understandings of the politics of food.
Finley, Karen	The Return of the Chocolate Smeared Woman	1998	D1444	This piece takes its title from a section of Finley's 1990 performance <i>We Keep Our Victims Ready</i> , which was part of a battle in the USA around the National Endowment for the Arts (the federal organisation for arts funding). Finley's piece, along with three others, were denied funding on grounds of 'obscenity', which sparked a national debate referred to as the 'culture wars'. In <i>Return of the Chocolate Smeared Woman</i> Finley, covered in chocolate, recounts this experience and rails against the conservative, patriarchal paradigm in the US. Finley also draws on food/dining in her book <i>Living It Up: Humorous Adventures in Hyperdomesticity</i>

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Foodgasm Berlin	<i>Lessons</i>	2012	<a href="http://bit.ly/29xDcq2">http://bit.ly/29xDcq2</a>	Foodgasm Berlin are a collective of artists including Liz Rosenfeld, Sam Icklow and Imogean Heath, who create intimate and large-scale food making installations that are paired with or function as performance. In <i>Lessons</i> , Icklow and Rosenfeld use a vacation in the Hamptons as opportunity to interrogate aspirational food cooking television shows and to offer queer life lessons. Presented as part of 'I'm With You: Queer Home Economics'.
Fox, Oriana	<i>Multitasking</i>	2010	<a href="http://bit.ly/29xD2iB">http://bit.ly/29xD2iB</a>	Testing the limits of her 'femininity' Fox attempts to exercise, paint a portrait, make pancakes all while curling her hair and offering dream analysis. 10 minutes of labour in homage to another artist project <i>Let's Paint TV</i> .
Goodden, Carol Tina Grirouad and Gordon Matta-Clark	<i>Food</i>	Founded 1971	P2371, P2718	An artist-run restaurant in Soho, NYC. A short film about the restaurant was shot by the photographer Robert Frank in 1972.
Holstein, Lauren Barri	<i>How to become a cupcake</i>	2013	D2118	Featuring choreography and live video, <i>How to Become a Cupcake</i> plays with and against visual fetishizations of the female body.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Kipper Kids	<i>Tea Ceremony</i>	1974	P2760	A ritualistic but also anarchistic work by the performance art duo which lifts elements from conventions of English tea drinking and Japanese tea ceremonies. In an interview with Linda Montano, Brian Routh emphasises that this and other Kipper Kids' works are not parodies but 'purely motivated from a subconscious urge'. (See <i>Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties</i> ).
Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara	<i>Playing to the Senses: food as a performance medium</i>	1999	A0040	An overview of a number of intersections between food and performance that also asks how the history of theatre can be understood not as autonomous but in relation to the senses: what would this history look like? Published in a special issue of <i>Performance Research</i> journal 'On Cooking', which also includes numerous other resources for thinking about the intersections between food and performance.
Knowles, Alison	<i>#2 Proposition</i>	1962	D1442, P2636, P2495, P1932	An event score with the instructions 'make a salad'. Knowles has performed this score internationally, making a simple salad for a group.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Lacey, Suzanne	Learn Where the Meat Comes From	1976	P1962, P1950	A performance for video and photograph in which Lacy performs a demonstration with a lamb carcass, drawing on the persona of American TV personality Julia Child
Lamarre, Paul and Melissa Wolf aka (EIDIA)	FOOD, SEX, ART: The Starving Artist's Cookbook	1986-1991	<a href="http://bit.ly/29xCN78">http://bit.ly/29xCN78</a>	A compendium of 150 videos of artists cooking. ( <a href="http://neatapes.com/starvingartists/">http://neatapes.com/starvingartists/</a> )
Lyman, D. Morrison	LEMON	2003	N/A	Performance in Chicago involving eating several lemons, skin and all in front of an audience
Mad for Real	Soya Sauce and Ketchup Flight	2000	EF5097, V0553, D0167, P0685, DB0041	Artist duo Cai Yuan and Jian Jun Xi, known for political and anarchic interventions in public space, staged this soya sauce and ketchup fight first in Trafalgar Square, London, and later internationally.
Maranca, Bonnie	Slice of Life: Contemporary Writers on Food	2003	P2978	Maranca compiled this publication on food writing in a departure from her work as a performance critic. The publication includes an essay by Maranca on 'Theatres of Food', connecting her thoughts on food writing to an overview of the use of food in the historical and recent avant garde

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Marinetti, F.T.	<i>The Futurist Cookbook</i>	2009 (a compilation of texts including Marinetti's 1930 Manifesto of Futurist Cooking)	P0515	The premise of Marinetti's vision of Futurist cooking is that food should be separated from appetite. In the future, technology will take care of the functional requirements of the body; everything else should be art. Thus we should, Marinetti argues, compose meals which deliver the greatest intensity of sensation, and not necessarily pleasant ones. Marinetti is particularly irate about pasta, which he sees as creating a sluggish and passive population.
McCarthy, Paul	<i>Painting, Wall, Whip</i>	1974	A0440, A0083, P2642	A video work that, like much of McCarthy's work, involves fluids like ketchup and mayonnaise and the use of raw meat.
Merklein, Veronika	<i>Life-Long Weight-Gaining</i>	2013	P1604	An installation invoking an awards ceremony for a fictional beauty contest. The installation includes a performance in which the artist stands naked on a chocolate scale. Over the course of the performance, her body heat melts the scale.
Mogul, Susan	<i>Design for Living</i>	1980	P2495	see ' <i>Uncooking Your Meals</i> ' in this guide.



Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Montano, Linda	<i>Performance Artists Talking in the 80s</i>	2000	P0193	A series of interviews with artists which focuses particularly on questions of everyday life, including questions about food. The book follows on from a feature by Montano on 'Food and Art' in the magazine <i>High Performance</i> .
Mouse	<i>Cum Smash My Eggs</i>	2015	P2573, D1335	Mouse serves up Britain's best breakfast from every orifice.
Piper, Adrian	<i>Food for the Spirit</i>	1971	P2396	This series of works resulted from a period Piper spent fasting, reading Immanuel Kant's <i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> and practicing yoga. The series of photographs and an audio recording acted as methods for Piper to re-connect to the corporeal.
Rosler, Martha	<i>Semiotics of the Kitchen</i>	1974	D2867, D1607, P2495	A performance for film which enacts a deadpan parody of cooking demonstrations, and critiques consumer culture. Rosler has often used food in her highly political work, including the short film a budding gourmet. In this, a middle class housewife reveals class anxieties connected to her developing sense of gastronomic taste.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Schneeman, Carolee	<i>Meat Joy</i>	1964	P2473, P2121	Meat Joy was a group performance with raw fish, chickens, sausages, paint, plastic, rope, and shredded scrap paper.
Scottee	<i>Burger Queen</i>	2011	D2104, D1268	Scottee's Burger Queen was a 'beauty pageant for fat people and friends' held at the Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London. The rounds included: 'Trend (fat fashion), Taste (your signature dish) and Talent (light entertain....ment for heavy weights)'.
Sekula, Allan	<i>This Ain't China: A Photonovel</i>	1974	<a href="http://bit.ly/29BmuVr">http://bit.ly/29BmuVr</a>	This 'photo-novel' portrays employees of a diner in San Diego discussing politics and planning a strike.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Smith, Barbara T.	<i>Ritual Meal</i>	1969	P2495	This performance involved a meal eaten with surgical implements. From Smith's website: 'The room was shattered by films and projections across the walls (human heart beating in an open heart surgery, ocean waves, slides of galaxies, body systems, films of the waiters naked hiking). Multiple loops of various sounds were combined with live synthesizer music and the continuous deep and loud beating of a human heart. Attendants never spoke nor told the guests what to do. The piece created the dilemma of seeming to be consuming a body while simultaneously experiencing union with the cosmos.' <a href="http://www.barbaratsmithart.com/category/performances/ritual-meal/">http://www.barbaratsmithart.com/category/performances/ritual-meal/</a>
Sugiyama, Mao	<i>Ham Cybele - Century Banquet</i>	2012	<a href="http://huff.to/1kwmgyl">http://huff.to/1kwmgyl</a>	Tokyo illustrator Mao Sugiyama (who goes by the nickname 'HC'), publicly seasoned and braised his own genitals on a portable gas cartridge burner, and then served them to five eager diners who each paid about \$250 for the meal (a sixth was a no-show). The genitals had been returned to Sugiyama, frozen and double-bagged in plastic, following elective genital removal surgery on his 22nd birthday in early April.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Švankmajer, Jan	<i>Food (Jíldo)</i>	1992	P2718	Czech artist and filmmaker Švankmajer offers a critique of the socio-political landscape through an allegory presenting three meals in one day - each more cannibalistic than the last.
Swallow, Ricky	<i>Killing Time &amp; Salad Days</i>	2003-2005	<a href="http://www.rickyswallow.com/">http://www.rickyswallow.com/</a>	Australian sculpture and media artist Ricky Swallows creates uncanny sculptures of discarded dinner tables and freshly killed game. Swallows work performs 'still life' at the moment of event-deaths.
Thorpe, Mo	<i>The Performance Dinners</i>	2013	P2413	A performance dinner set up by CCW Graduate School (University Arts, London) for 25 artists and academics. Each person invited to make a five minute contribution to perform their response to various themes.

Artist	Work Title	Year	LADA Catalogue Number	Brief Annotation
Tiravanija, Rikrit	<i>pad thai</i> (retitled <i>Untitled (Free/Still)</i> )	1990	P2718	An installation in which the artist prepares and serves a Thai curry to the gallery visitors. This became a key work in what Nicolas Bourriaud dubbed 'Relational Aesthetics' – works that foreground the social as aesthetic material.
Tolentino, Julie	<i>Honey</i>	2010	<a href="https://vimeo.com/19917303">https://vimeo.com/19917303</a>	A durational performance in which a steady stream of honey (totalling 25 lb) is poured over Tolentino's body from the height of a large ladder.
Walsh, Helena	<i>Consuming Colonies</i>	2007	D1253	Walsh cooked and served the placenta from her recent childbirth to a series of male friends. Much of Walsh's work deals with motherhood, and also uses food to radicalise domesticity. She particularly uses potatoes in a variety of statements regarding the state of feminist politics and reproductive rights in her native Ireland.
Zhu Yu	<i>Eating People</i>	2000	D0112, P0579, P1114	A series of controversial photographs which appear to show the artist eating a human fetus.

## **Un-cooking Your Meals: Digestion at the Dinner Table**

In 1980, **Susan Mogul** performs 'Design for Living' in New York City. While Mogul makes a salad and ruminates on the process of preparing each vegetable, interior designer Jerri Allen rushes to fashion the space around Mogul to match the vegetables. Each ingredient Mogul uses inspires the mise en scène and may also end up as an art object on the walls behind her. Allen's frantic costuming of the space physically interrupts Mogul's seemingly simple task of salad preparation –green lettuce requires a green tablecloth and a green apron; red tomato requires a red tablecloth and red apron.

**Bobby Baker** performs 'Table Occasion No. 18' in London, in 2000. Each table occasion has 'very strict rules,' as Baker informs the crowd. There are also very simple ingredients:

- A table
- 2 Chairs
- Travelling cool bag
- An occasion
- and Baker, herself

With these ingredients she aims to do something new to mark the specialness of each occasion, for it is, as she notes, 'the first and last time we will be together in one space.' On this occasion there will be a networking dinner. Would-be guests will be functionally introduced by Bobby to one another while she, atop the table, serves out wine (she always has three glasses, for herself, on the go – one at the table, one at the fridge, one at the cooker), serves the courses (note the watercress soup is made ever more inviting with green food colouring) and 'be far too busy to actually talk to anyone.'

As part of his 'Magazine' series in 2007, **David Hoyle** presents 'Cookery' in London. In one of the three sections Hoyle plays a tortured housewife, miming her be-drudged life around a kitchen table to a well-known tune. Lights out, lights up and Hoyle begins to paint for the audience with the food items that set the stage of his mime. The painting is aggressive. Hoyle's whole body is part of the process: he claws at it, falls toward and away from the canvas, he rubs his groin in to it, rips his cloths off. The painting is complete.

He asks us: 'what has the figurative got to tell us? ... Not a lot.'

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In each of these performances the artists align themselves with a table to play with food. Such 'play' offers ludic interrogations about gender and cultural valuations of domestic and artistic labour which may be difficult to digest. Food is never fully cooked in these performances. The raw materials are there, acts of preparation, mimed cooking processes – but nothing completed.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his *The Origin of Table Manners*[1] famously provides his readers with the 'culinary triangle:' a method for addressing cultural relationships to food and how they perform culturally. He offers that our relationship to food, across cultures, is arranged in accordance to three states: raw, cooked, and rotten. The raw food is incomplete (despite being in its most 'natural' state) – it requires socio-cultural labor to transform it into being cultural. Cooked here often means transformed through technological processes (to be cooked can be to dry, or cure, or roast, or boil, etc.). Rotten food is excessively expendable as it returns itself to the 'natural,' through decomposition. Such decomposition may, however, be reaffirmed culturally and ingested anew (think about cheese and wine, and the 'cooking' they require). Each culture, he

argues, treats these three states differently, but over-all, 'we' (any society) favour fully 'cooked' meals at our tables.

In the three performances that we encounter at the outset of this short essay, the artists attempt to cook up food within the context of art, and as art. This doubling of art as form unprepares the work for digestion (in a gastronomical sense) but heightens its consumability within a theatrical or performatic framework. As scholar Adrian Heathfield notes, 'the object [in the theatre of food] is literally consumed with all the sensual delights materialised in a project of consumption'. Such projects of consumption produce loads of (and loaded) symbolic and material excess.

To attend to the meal at these tables, one must address the various cultural assumptions they have about food, the body and the processes which make knowledge easy to swallow.

[1] Lévi-Strauss, C. (1978) *Mythologiques (Vol 3): The Origins of Table Manners*. Translated by John Weightman and Doreen Weightman. London: University of Chicago Press.



## Jelili Atiku: The Feast Series

Nigerian sculptor and performance artist Jelili Atiku urges his audiences to consider what sustains us, and what eats away at us, through this series of public, body-based performance interventions. Atiku attempts to encounter the spiritual through the (sometimes startlingly) material, to use ephemerality to provoke lingering impressions and, hopefully, abiding social change.

The first two pieces ('Cain's Feast' and 'Abel's Feast') feel, as the names suggest, very much like siblings in the family of work titled *The Feast Series*. The performances juxtapose fruit and flesh in a reflection on sacrifice, abundance and value. Atiku hurls himself down the food chain among the fur and fascia and organs, challenging manmade systems which necessitate and even valorise bloodletting and violence as assertions of personhood and sovereignty.

In 'Porondogo' (*The Feast Series #3*, Freedom Park, Lagos, Nigeria), Atiku performs before an edifice of bones. Yellow-skinned, barbaric cock extended and near-tumescent outside a yellow loin cloth to a soundtrack of an animal – a cow, the spectator thinks; she hears its distress and concludes correctly that it's going to the abattoir. The artist offers the improvised audience members a bone, an organic relic of systematic but quotidian slaughter, a memento.

\*

I see all of this on a screen, through a contraption made of rare earth minerals so valuable they fuel endless wars, made by people in possession of minds and souls and lives under conditions of forced obsolescence.

I know that, as a citizen of the Global North, what I see in this

work is something particular. For me, this series – and much of Atiku's repertoire – draws from two informal archives: the canon of Yoruba symbolism, and the pseudo-Africa in the imaginations of the Western spectators. Disrupting the (often unconsciously) presumed innocence of the African subject, these performances show the naivety of the post-colonial mind back to itself and mobilise it as a tool of resistance.

I am confronted with a paradox of the authentic as I find myself questioning whether this costume or that ritual belong to a set of folk traditions which I might associate with African-ness, or whether they convey an individuated expression of the artist's aesthetic. Confronted by a Black body, have I flattened the artist's individuality, asking othered bodies to speak for an oppressed group? Recognising this tendency, even on the part of racially othered Westerners, should make us attentive to micro-aggressions within our own perceptions.

As I consider Atiku's work, the paradoxes I associate with Africa in particular seem to metaphorise global inequity in general. I think of the oil and natural gas wealth of Nigeria and the lights abruptly failing during my tech run in a Lagos theatre. I think about the glut of resources funnelled out of a 'poor' country and down corporate throats. I think that work which invokes feasting, coming from the continent I least associate with eating to excess, carries an irony that could break bones.

\*

Our proverbial Western mother tells her children to eat up, 'clean' their plates because, as we're all trained to know, there are starving children in African who would kill for our scraps of lima beans and meatloaf.

Africa is dusty and barren, fecund only with flies and the goodwill of brave white folks with an appetite for adventure and

for souls. Africa is poor because it's always been poor. Africa has nothing to offer but cautionary tales to correct the transgressions of the protestant soul, a navigational tool by which we can steer our lives away from the hungry monsters at the edge of the map.

\*

Does having a place at the table necessarily entail 'table manners?'

Around certain tables, the good savage doesn't lick her bowl. Her dexterity with a knife and fork almost resembles fingers working at a loom in some bygone cottage industry. Her hosts notice with approval. She removes an errant bone with her fingertips and places it at the side of her plate. She does not take the last bite but leaves a little behind because she is not starving. Not another bite; she couldn't possibly. She doesn't have a mother to remind her of the starving children far away. She's happy to be here, and we're happy to have her because she proves that there is space at the table for anyone. Not everyone, mind. That would go too far. The one savage is enough. Without eating too much, she is worth more than her weight. Not even vaguely African, but near enough.

Who's the cannibal here?

## Gorge Research: A Photo Essay

Gorge is a performance and a meal and a platform for thought. It brings bodies around a kitchen table for a messy, politically charged encounter with other bodies. It's 'gorge', like gorge yourself silly, until the gorge rises, and like: that's gorge, babez.

Gorge investigates how food as a performance medium has a relationship to the essay form. How does a meal stage an idea, coordinate concepts, or deliver an argument? On the flip side, how do the excessive, embodied dimensions of food and eating extend what it means to think? The project uses these questions to explore queerness and kinship, the private and the public, domesticity and work, etiquette and bad behaviour, hunger and desire.

Gorge draws on art and performance examples, from Fluxus to the *Futurist Cookbook*, and from Martha Rosler to David Hoyle. The project also deals with academic theory, popular literature and mainstream media personalities.

The following section to this guidebook is a photo-essay. It serves both as a document of these events and a course of image/texts set to feed its user the ways in which we built on the various items that make up the preceding index. I'm With You aim to stage an encounter with our practice-based-research methodologies to highlight both the messy and mannerly opportunities they have afforded us thus far.

Each image is accompanied with a text that was made for a public Gorge event or from its documentation. They are not reproduced chronologically, nor are they meant to, necessarily, build on each other. As food for thought, and techniques for action, they facilitate Gorge research.

service



Will everyone please be more careful, please.

Don't cross the road if I can see you. Don't zip up trousers that dig into your stomach. Please don't write anything about your (necessary, inevitable) mother dying, if not soon, then later. If you shave your legs, they will feel dry and they might itch and it won't be in a place that is satisfying to scratch. Don't read the comments section for so long so your eyes feel milky. Please, if you cross the road and I can see your vulnerable body, and your stupid confidence, and your timing which might work this time but no guarantees because these body-machines constantly degrade and the once-calibrated is one day the no-longer-sequenced, maybe this afternoon, maybe while I can see you, from the upper level of this bus. Don't celebrate birthdays with text. Don't listen to any voice that fizzes in your gut. Don't make or receive phone calls at unspecified hours. Try to finish what you start, as long as you begin indoors. Don't define 'public' too generously, if you don't want flies in your bedroom. Keep the surfaces dry. Keep your mouth closed under water. Keep going to public bathrooms for the quiet. Don't be afraid of the gaps in your memory, but don't ever trust them to be gentle.



takeaway



*Certain equations:*

A lap tray  $\neq$  a dinner table

A fork  $>$  a spoon

Sausages – you = x

(x is an integer between loneliness and desire)

Sharon = T.V. Dinners



mutual concern



Here's what you want: for someone else to do it for you.

Here's what you want: associative relationships to desire (so you don't have to carry the weight of desire; ya know cause then people will know you ate the pizza after dinner and how much you fucked that person that time, shhhh).

Here's what you want: some mind reading. Friendships without familial obligations. And Kale.

Here's what you want: clarity in the form of a worksheet.  $1 + 1$  often equals the last three people I fell in love with. But I wouldn't shed a tear for them.

Here's what you want: for me to stroke your casserole - your ego in the shape of brunch.

Here's what you want: for the violent outline of your appetite to catch on fire and be admired in its own right.

Here's what you want: an ethics of punctuality. Call me whatever you want but just don't call me late for dinner.

Here's what you want: hope in the shape of someone else's labour.

Here's what you want: perfect instructions for direct action, guaranteed effective, linear cause and effect; this olive oil cake comes out right every. single. time.

Here's what you want: a recipe for happiness (or, whatever).



chicken



*(Sorry, but you're boring. You make me yearn for silence, for the absence of you)*

*(Do the chicken dance, you chicken)*

*(It's mean in the henhouse, and hot and loud and feathery)*

*(I hate to say it, but fear makes your face look puffy, indecision makes you smell funny)*

*(It's mean here, and you're soft and easy and you're bringing us down. You're soft and we're not)*

*(We'll laugh at them won't we. We'll laugh and laugh)*



fruit



In 1978, the People's Temple Agricultural Project, or 'Jonestown', became notorious when over 900 members of the cult died of cyanide poisoning consumed in a sugary red liquid.

In the US, 'drinking the Kool-Aid' has become synonymous with brainwashing and mass manipulation, though the powdered-drink brand is at pains to point out that the Jonestown residents in fact consumed a different brand, 'Flavour-Aid', in the fatal moments.

Flavour-aid or Kool-aid: either way, the taste is generic 'fruit flavour', industrial, and if you had the right childhood, delicious.

They prepare the Kool-Aid, thinking about buy-ins and misperceptions, choices and consequences, groups and leaders and sharing.

You raise the glass. You bring it to your lips. You drink.



**BAD ESSAY**

bad essay



Theodor Adorno says, 'The bad essay chats about people instead of opening up the matter at hand'

We say, 'An essay is delicious. An essay digests. An essay is shit'

We gorge on history, gorge on other artists' work, other writers' words, other cooks' recipes.

We think about sell-by dates and use-by dates and we shake off the idea that we're just a little bit past it.

Our aesthetics are less relational and more relationship drama.

In our bad essay, we look at you.

Look at all of you.

We'd love to have you for dinner.



## **CREDITS**

### **I'm With You**

Season Butler, Christa Holka, R. Justin Hunt, and Johanna Linsley and associated artists

[www.imwithyou.me](http://www.imwithyou.me)

@iwygorge

### **Photo Essay Credits**

'service' 2014, Image by: Julia Bauer

Pictured: R. Justin Hunt and Johanna Linsley, 'Table Lecture' @ Buzzcut Festival

'takeaway' 2013, Image by: Christa Holka

Pictured: guests of Feast, 'Table Lecture' by Christa Holka, R. Justin Hunt and Christa Holka @ Pacitti Company Think Tank

'mutual concern' 2015, Image by: Christa Holka

Pictured: pickle, a product of The Foodgasm Berlin & I'm With You kitchen @ The Lubomirov/Angus-Hughes Gallery

'chicken' 2014, Image by: Christa Holka

Pictured: Season Butler, 'Fried Chicken' @ Apiary Studios

'fruit' 2014, Image by: Christa Holka

Pictured: Pete Cant, Johanna Linsley, Alex Eisenberg, Yves Blais @ Proud Archivist, organized by CCLAP.

'bad essay ' 2015, Image by Colin Gray

Pictured: Johanna Linsley, Christa Holka, Dr Sharon Husbands, Alex Eisenberg and audience, 'Bad Essay' @ Buzzcut Festival

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