

INTRODUCTION

TITLE SEQUENCE - [merge to BM Events Listing vertical r/h with venue images]

I will be speaking to you today about my research and the output of the work that has engaged me for the past decade, work which sometimes takes its own path, diverging from my core objective and building its own momentum reaching out to touch people who were not originally in my line of sight.

BreadMatters is an organic research and development programme; my role in **BreadMatters** is as a mediator and choreographer seeking to use the programme to bring insight through the medium of bread and the emphasis placed on the social, political, theological and cultural constructs of bread inherent in society.



By organic research and development I mean the output of **BreadMatters** Forum and Exhibition is location orientated with thematic content emphasised by geographical location, each of the three **BreadMatters** programmes held thus far have explored different aspects of culture through bread, derived from the heritage of the culture where the event takes place. I will return to this in more detail later, first I'd better explain the What and Why? of bread and how this programme came into existence.

What is BreadMatters? [lower screen heading – main image series of contributors works]

I began this project in the late 1990's; it developed out of the work I had been doing with bread during the previous few years. **BreadMatters** is in the format of forum and exhibition and each event is attended by approximately twenty participants drawn from a broad spectrum of media; musicians/composers, live artists, sculptors, photographers, video, installation artists, and others as well as participants drawn from the disciplines of poetry, literature, history, philosophy, theology, sociology, anthropology and the sciences.

Where has BreadMatters taken place? [lower screen heading] [highlight Lublin r/h of screen – with BM1 theme][images of Lublin Gallery]

The first **BreadMatters** event took place in June 2000 at the NN Theatre, Lublin Poland, participants were drawn from Poland, Portugal, England and Spain to present works and discuss the '**Socio-Political and Cultural in Bread**'. NN Theatre houses a Jewish Museum and is at the gateway to Lublin's former Jewish Ghetto; the theatre screens socio-political films and contemporary video work by a broad spectrum of artists.



[highlight Lisboa r/h of screen – with BM2 theme][images of Lisboa Gallery]
Bread Matters II the '**Performative in Bread**', was held at the Museum of Water, Lisboa, Portugal in September 2003, and it drew participants from Portugal, Poland, England, Norway, Italy and Cape Verde Islands.

[highlight West Cork r/h of screen – with BM3 theme][images of WCAC Gallery]

The most recent **BreadMatters** event took place in September this year as part of Cork 2005 - European Capital of Culture, at the West Cork Arts Centre, Skibbereen in Ireland where eighteen participants from Ireland, England, Portugal and Poland gathered to present their work and to discuss '**Mediating through Bread and Art**'.



Where is BreadMatters going? [lower screen heading] [Europe, USA & Africa][main image – IA merged stills from video]

Negotiations are currently underway for two further **BreadMatters** interventions in Europe, one in the former Eastern bloc, and I'm actively seeking partner organisations to help launch the **BreadMatters** project in continents outside of Europe.

One aspect of **BreadMatters** that I will touch upon in more detail is the ability for the event to develop spin off programmes. These programmes are very different in nature and character from **BreadMatters** the exhibition and forum, but nonetheless they are relevant and pertaining to the conceptual undercurrent of **BreadMatters**. The Portuguese organisation CAIS, a charity working with the homeless and less advantage strands of society, together with myself, formulated a programme for Christmas 2004 - **Bread of All**.

IMAGES - BREAD OF ALL [CAIS Magazine cover + event images]

In West Cork, more than twenty secondary schools have signed up to a programme to explore sociological and cultural aspects of bread through the works on view during October 2005 in the **BreadMatters III** exhibition. The gallery is offering the participating schools an exhibition in January 2006. [Images of Gallery]

BREADMATTERS IDEOLOGY [NEW TITLE SEQUENCE]

Concept of bread touching society in various ways. [lower screen heading]

[Run name sequence of participating artists r/h of screen] [images from Alexandra's video + SI children's sketches]

Bread is the most ordinary of foods. such a simple food is the immediate reaction. Bread was likely the first food we ate this morning, and for visitors to Norway, bread probably gave you your first 'taste' of this country. Bread is often the first thing we eat when we visit another country and we easily identify countries by their breads, and breads by their countries. Think of France and the baguette and croissant, think of the Naan bread of India, see a bagel and we see

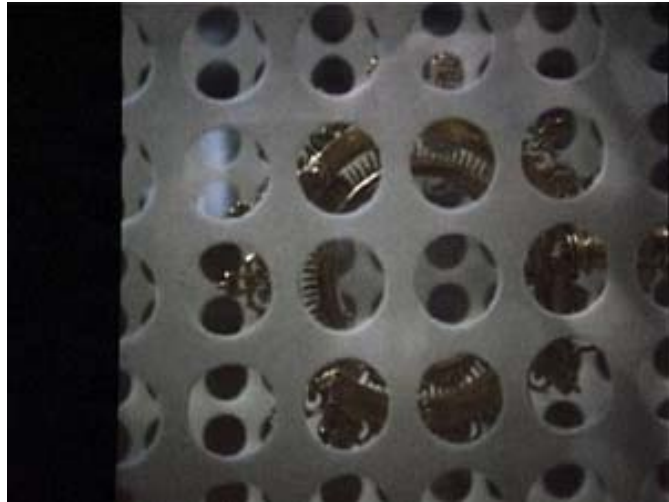


the mark of Judaism, and we can generalise about bread taking note of the numerous flat breads of the Middle East and Asia or the heavy rye breads of Central Europe; we may be more specific and cite the now ubiquitous Pitta bread that originated in Ancient Greece

and somewhere along the path transformed into Pizza, or the robust sourdough rye bread of the Volga basin, a travellers bread much prized for its 'keeping' quality and like as not virtually the same bread that fed Scandinavian merchants plying trade between the Baltic and the Bosphorus in the thirteenth century.

That a simple combination of flour and water should grace the lives of so many nations is no accident. The baking process has a certain mysticism, more than

any other readily accessible process the baking of bread contains all of the primeval components of creation. Bread encompasses the elements of earth (grain), water, air (in transformation during rising), and fire. It is no surprise that bread acquired a special significance for many cultures and that it became an adopted symbol by religion; in Christianity bread is 'The Body of Christ' [J Newling image 'from BM1] in the ceremony of the Eucharist, and the ritual of 'the breaking of bread' to start the day or a meal is common in many cultures, none more so than in the Jewish faith where the Challah bread



[image - RW / BM3] has ritualistic and ceremonial status within the household and at mealtime. Many cultures revere bread, as a component of a meal its place on the table signifies more than just food; it marks humankind's transition from hunter gather to farmer. It was the use of grain as a basic food stock that enabled communities to establish a permanent community base.

Bread, in its multiple forms, is a staple food for many cultures, cheap, simple, and accessible, it has become synonymous with plenty and with famine. Society takes bread for granted until it is deprived from its grasp by nature and famine, or by political expediency and war. In the 1850's, millions died in Ireland during the potato famine whilst landowners shipped corn out of Ireland to swell the coffers of the British Exchequer struggling to pay for the wars against France. In the late 1800's famine swept through Northern Scandinavia, in Finland, to stretch the meagre rations of flour, animal bones and dried bark were ground to a powder and added to the mix and made into bread; and as recent as the 1990's in the Balkan war NATO forces set up mobile bakeries in war torn regions of what was once known as Yugoslavia to bring comfort and relief to the desperate - the

symbol of freshly baked bread enough to pacify and reassure a ravaged people that better days were to come.



Accessibility for all [lower screen title] [Bread of All images]

Bread touches all of us. Its abundance brings comfort, its scarcity brings anguish, the symbolic appropriation of bread extends the conscious boundary of bread as sustenance and places it, for some, on a philosophical level, bound with deliverance, a daily reminder in ritual, at the table and at the altar, that bread is life, literally and metaphorically. If the media machine wishes to remind us of our good fortune, the downtrodden are shown

hungry, waiting in the breadline for soup and a hunk of bread; [breadline image] and how easily we forget the soup, it is the bread that is the saviour, the life giving force, and it is no coincidence that the majority of Soup Kitchens even today are backed by religious groupings, the exception being Al Capone's Chicago Soup Kitchen that served three hot meals a day to the needy in the Great Depression of the 1920's.

[N Rolfe – video short from BM3][continue list of participating artists r/h of screen]

In my childhood, growing up on a farm, the ritual of the sowing, the harvesting of grains and the making of bread seamlessly merged with the Catholic ritual of the Eucharist; I am part of a generation that has lived with and through the consumer revolution that has seen even rural communities largely disassociate food

production and consumption but it is only in the past decade that I have witnessed just how far society has divorced itself from the natural cycle of my childhood. On the farm nothing was wasted, the virtuous circle embraced our lives, each component part in



the production cycle had value. My 'playhouse' as a child was a large framed drying rack in the shape of an elongated house draped with the stalks of maize left to dry in the sun and air, I played in the shaded interior modelling shapes from the clay my father dug from the drainage ditches bounding the fields. The maize stalks were winter feed for the animals that helped my father work the land, the last vestige of an annual crop whose seed is ground into a coarse flour to make the traditional Portuguese corn bread, the husks were then used for animal bedding, later composted and returned again to the soil to complete the cycle. It was in the 1990's that I confronted the severity of separation between production and consumption, I was in despair when I found I could not even give to charity the unsold bread from my partners organic bakery whilst nightly the media machine churned forth images of the hungry in Rwanda and Bosnia, ignoring the 'cardboard cities' in the streets of London. It was at this point that I took the left over bread to my studio, unable to simply throw it away, and began to experiment, play and question Bread. [IA - image WITH / OUT]

I completed several pieces in the 1990's incorporating bread [IA - image **SAPPHIRES IN THE MUD**) culminating in a show in Lublin, Poland where I sat late into the night with Andrzej Mroczek, Director of the gallery, and Jolanda Mederowicz, the curator, explaining my idea for **BreadMatters** and persuading Andrzej and Jola to help me host the first **BreadMatters** event.

From the outset I was determined **BreadMatters** should be more than simply 'another exhibition', I wanted that bread should be used as a catalyst and a metaphor to understand the construct of communities and societies and the relationship between the multi-faceted manifestation of society as expressed through 'the arts', philosophy, theology and 'the sciences' and since not all of these groupings would be able to express themselves through art, it was essential to provide a forum facility for **BreadMatters** where contributions could be expressed and discussed. This desire gave foundation to the overall format of **BreadMatters** Exhibition and Forum, the exhibition spanning four weeks and opening with a two-day forum session.

Where does *BreadMatters* fit in the scheme of things? [Lower screen title]

[Run IA Video BM3]

Before looking at the research function of **BreadMatters** in more detail, I think it might be useful to consider where the format fits within the generality of the art's scene, galleries and the public accessibility to and of art.

During the 1990's an undeniable pattern began to emerge in the way Art is accessed by the public, the trend toward mega-galleries and mega-exhibitions accelerated and became to a degree established, particularly in major tourism centres; indeed some places in Europe, for example Bilbao, are known almost exclusively for the iconoclastic Guggenheim rather than for the culture of the region. Tate Modern in London is another example, immensely successful for reasons quite different from Bilbao, the Tate Modern has of itself created a new art form, the mega-installation. But what of the smaller galleries and provincial galleries? After opening night, how many visitors do these galleries receive? It is very difficult to find statistical evidence of the change in visitor numbers to the smaller galleries, although anyone involved in Art knows it is happening, more

project involved twenty multi-disciplinary artists from seven countries who gathered in the Azores for a two-week workshop followed by an exhibition in the Azores, which then travelled to Lisboa, Madrid and London. The Azores project was immensely complex to organise and expensive to fund and whilst the



project achieved significant level of community penetration, and left the lasting legacy of a Sculpture Park on the island of Faial, the 'artists' were still interlopers in a community, it was we 'the artists' that were of interest rather more than anything we had to communicate through our work or by word. This is not to say that the work was undervalued, but it was our intervention and presence that engendered a large degree of community interest. I saw this as a shortcoming of an otherwise very successful project.

Bread as a Catalyst [lower screen title] [selection of images from BM1-3]

Given the role that bread played in cultural and social aspects of my life, it was a natural progression for me to think in terms of shaping future research programmes reaching into communities, using a commodity interface eminently acceptable and questioning through the work and presentations of the contributors the perceptions and ideological markers that frame our realities.

Each **BreadMatters** is specific to the country and location of the event. The single unifying strand is bread itself. The Lublin programme used the socio-political and cultural undercurrents of the city as the motivating theme for contributors drawing on the extraordinary political and cultural heritage of a town

near the Ukrainian border whose political and religious masters changed with alarming regularity.

The Lisboa forum and exhibition was held at the Museum of Water, once the pumping station that kept Lisboa's reservoirs charged with water. The museum echoes a bygone age and speaks of humankind's ability to master its environment through invention allied with machine beauty and expresses the daily ritual inherent in water, and in bread, in a society that embraces both. The theme for Lisboa was 'The Performative in Bread' with the analogy to ritual expressed by collaborators in exhibited works and forum presentations.

BreadMatters in Skibbereen, West Cork used the theme of 'Mediating through Bread and Art' as a starting place for interventions and deliberations. Skibbereen lays dark claim to be the 'capital' of the potato famine that devastated Ireland in the 1850's and resulted in the population of Ireland halving over a decade through famine and migration.



For this latter project - part of Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture - [run Cork 2005 logo] two artists worked extensively on projects involving communities over a six month period before the **BreadMatters** event in September. One artist worked with remote and isolated

communities on the Beara peninsular in the far south-west of Ireland recording and marking the ritual of bread-making and the role of ritual within the community. The other artist worked with a small island community gathering memories and associations of bread through the culture of island life and the role

of the historical legacy of the island. The artist worked with the children of the island to produce a video installation filmed and screened in a ruined Abbey on the island; the screening was attended by almost all of the island population.

BreadMatters - legacy [Title sequence lower screen][images of Dolly's house]

Through **BreadMatters** I have found a way of bringing together a disparate range of people; artists and non-artists, researchers, academics, lay people and different communities by using a commodity readily accessible at various levels. Communities and individuals are happy to talk about bread, the making of bread and the ritual surrounding bread. It evokes memories and histories and opens discussion to cultural values in a non-challenging way. The images on the screen are from an afternoon spent talking and baking on Sherkin Island in the home of Dolly who made the traditional Irish Soda Bread for afternoon tea. I spent hours talking with a group of women and came to a greater understanding of island life, gathering and collating memories of bread.

The **Bread of All** project in Lisboa, organised with CAIS, reached out to the wider community who might otherwise shy away from contact with the disadvantaged. In the days before Christmas last year, it was a great pleasure to see how it is possible to bring together all strands of a society, however briefly. Bread of All served over 10,000 rolls in three frenetic afternoons. Two temporary pavilions were erected in one of Lisboa's main squares, Praça da Figueira, from there we gave away freshly baked bread to people from all walks of life, bringing together rich and poor, Portuguese and non Portuguese, the very young and the old. As a continuation of my research I distributed bread to people of all ages and levels of society from Portugal and far flung lands, whilst asking in exchange for a memory, a thought on bread; and despite the throngs of people who gathered for the event, there was an intimacy in the exchange of the gift of bread for a memory. An event of that scale cannot be organised without a huge amount of support, our support came from the banks and institutions who helped finance

the venture, baking equipment manufacturers and suppliers who supplied the facilities all of whom provided volunteers. We had senior bank officers, company directors and Council officials making and serving bread to all. CAIS will now make this an annual event and I shall be working with them this year to enlist the support and participation of other Portuguese artists for the project.



The programme is very much ongoing and some aspects of the project have passed beyond my influence. In West Cork the gallery has experienced more visitors in October than ever before, that many of these visitors are school children, some of whom are perhaps

seriously questioning art for the first time, is rather encouraging. Many schools in West Cork are using the **BreadMatters** III exhibition to engage the children in their perception and understanding of Art through Bread. I will be allocating the children their own web pages through the **BreadMatters** web site; incidentally, the web site receives over sixty thousand hits per month which is of itself testimony to the general level of interest in the project. (Sept 2005 = 63,350 access requests)

There is a vast array of **BreadMatters** works and discourses by the artists and contributors you have seen listed on the screen available for closer examination through the website: www.breadmatters.org

The participants and contributors to **BreadMatters** have, I believe, gained significantly from their participation in the programme. I think this works for the participants at two levels; the obvious route of taking part and the opportunity to contribute, and I should point out that **BreadMatters** calls for contributions at the

thematic level for each event. Participants are selected from submissions received several months prior to the actual event. Beyond the contribution level is the participation and the intercourse between artists, and others, from a range of disciplines. It is the common experience of artists to work alone within the confines of the studio environment. **BreadMatters** is a participation event at every level and allows the opportunity for discourse, exchange, partaking, developing an artistic process and culture, contributing to a greater understanding. It engages people, altering their perceptions. It is a conduit for other related events, creating new directions and new possibilities. It questions and challenges perceptions by contributing to a larger and deeper pool of knowledge and creativity.