

K[ne(e){a}d]



A Collaborative Work in Clay and Bread by Amber Ginsburg and Joe Madrigal

The K[ne(e){a}d] project is an ongoing conversation surrounding shared interests and common themes culled from our individual studio practices: activating clay outside a materialist dialog; thinking about the history of clay and how that relates to our current lives/art; and exploring the potential of collaboration.

K^[NE(E){A}D] DEVELOPED AS WE DEBATED ART THEORY and ceramic history over the wall that separated our studios. These deliberations, which ranged from Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics to questioning ceramics as the ultimate archival material, moved from the studio to the dinner table and back again, when Madrigal became a regular at Ginsburg's Friday night family dinners. The conversation always became especially lively when the homemade bread was passed around.

The dialogue honed our thinking and parallels consistently emerged when discussing the relevance of ceramic history to our everyday actions. As ceramic vessels and technologies developed, actions in conjunction with these objects fell into clear patterns. Passing the bowl, holding the cup, filling the vessel to store food: all remain an unbroken lineage. We agreed that the technical advance of firing clay to use as cooking vessels marks a moment in ceramic history that continues to be enacted in ever shifting ways. Innovation has, without interruption, continued to inform interaction with material in a feedback cycle of innovation and use and a reflexive return to innovation. Our daily actions and domestic rituals maintain an elastic connection to early technology and use.

Installation View, Toledo, Ohio, US.

K[ne(e){a}d] invokes the technological advance of cooking in clay in a general sense, linking the technology to the behaviours surrounding the ware. The use of clay vessels to cook became a technological possibility when firing clay developed in Ice Age Europe (25,000 BCE) and continued across cultures and geography. By 5,000 BCE, it was common. It was recently found that the technology is much older than previously thought in the Americas, closer to 5,000 BCE rather than the oft-cited 2000 BCE. We are not historians or archeologists or even essentially interested in the precise dates of this advance. What does interest us is the repeated invention, in an abstract way, and how that continues to relate to our current actions.



Above left: Terracotta baking moulds in the town square, Darmstadt, Germany.

Above right: Kneading dough in the town square, Darmstadt, Germany.



We purposefully entered into the pre-existing historical conversation by cooking in clay vessels. Culturally, we are at a moment of grand upheaval in our actions surrounding food and the lineage of

action connecting clay and food are in question. As more people outsource the preparation of food to companies and restaurants and when food is eaten on the go, there is a break in the transmission of knowledge. A lineage of social interaction and connectivity is at stake and being undermined by the rupture in the way we commune around the fire (or electric) heat source and the dinner table. It is in light of this rapid change that we decided to invoke the initial contact with food and cooking vessels. *K[ne(e){a}d]* looks backward to skills and forward to continuing long histories between material and action.

Back in the studio, we decided to do a project that combines the history of terracotta and food. We wanted to bring our conversations around the table to a larger audience. For this project we asked the question, "What would it mean to insert a historic ceramic process (cooking in terracotta) into a social practice?" From this question, it seemed curiously obvious to link the skills and actions of the baker and ceramist by creating terracotta moulds of our hands and arms, bake bread in them and make the gallery a site that extends the long conversation that began when food and clay met.

Re-framing this particular technological innovation allows for an experimental encounter with newly minted artefacts. We created terracotta moulds from Madrigal's left and Ginsburg's right hand, arm, neck and shoulder. In performance, we bake with these moulds, activating the senses of sight, sound, touch and particularly smell, prompting intimate conversations about experience and memory.

K[ne(e){a}d] first took place in the space of a gallery but then moved into a variety of other sites both public and private, including the vernacular space of the town square, the educational space of the classroom and the intimate space of home kitchens. By extending *K[ne(e){a}d]* into these other social spheres, the project became a shared experience enacted in localized sites of exchange and transformed our audience into active participants. The audience was invited to taste the bread, as well as to mix, knead and bake with us. Bringing the kitchen conversations and process of bread baking, which typically remain hidden into the fore, encourages participation and dissolves the usual boundaries between viewer and artist.

When activated, *K[ne(e){a}d]* transforms space into intimate places of exchange. Exchange takes place on multiple and simultaneous points of entry: shared knowledge of ceramic history (with the terracotta moulds acting as prompts) the exchange of memories over the making and breaking of bread and knowledge-swapping around the issues and practices of craft.

The majority of the people we met during our performances have never baked bread. Working together, we offer the viewer a hands-on interaction with this basic food. The exchange was not unidirectional. We also learned from the people that we met, both experienced bakers and

Making of the Moulds

Madrigal is left-handed and Ginsburg is right-handed. We plaster cast our dominant sides. Combined, we are a disjointed set of arms. The hands, arms and shoulders are the active areas of the body when making clayworks and bread. *K[ne(e){a}d]* literalizes the concept 'from the labour of our hands'. The mould making is a three-step process. From plaster negatives of our upper bodies we press-mould solid clay forms. Once fired, these positives became sturdy detailed shapes. These forms, a hand here, an elbow there, are draped and pressed with terracotta slabs. By pressing and rubbing, one side takes on the detail of our bodies, the wrinkly ridges between fingers or the arch of a forearm, while the other is smoothed to a taught surface. To these bits and pieces of body parts, we add a flange or frame. This not only highlights the body part, it offers surface area for the bread dough to expand.

We finish the moulds with terra sigillata. The fine particles of clay quickly soak into the leather hard moulds. (Cont'd)

novices alike. We have heard about people making bread ovens from metal trash cans and discarded bricks. And while for most people, dough making is a new and exotic experience,



we have also learned family recipes about sour dough starters and of the fresh and remarkable taste of home-milled grains that spew from the grinder right into the batter.

Conversational themes that emerged in various settings prompted differing discussions and histories. In central Illinois, the many religious associations people made were a reflection of their lived experiences or the dominance of Christian culture within the broader community. Religion became one more ingredient for shared conversation. In Ohio, the body dominated the conversations. Upon recognizing the bodily forms, many people would not initially eat or even touch the bread. The conversations began to consider the grotesque, cannibalism and fetishism. In Pittsburgh, at the 2007 National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts conference, the connection to ceramic history and process became the warp of conversations while the connection between making ceramic objects and preparing food provided the weft. In Darmstadt, Germany just feet from a Joseph Beuys five-room installation entitled *Beuys-Block*, the conversation often wandered towards the notion of social sculpture and perhaps the age of the city prompted the connection between the moulds and Greek and Roman figure ware.

On the streets of Darmstadt, during a particularly Proustian moment, one woman recalled a buried memory of baking with her grandmother in a brick oven in a remote village in Turkey. In every city we have performed *K[ne(e){a}d]*, like the Petite Madeline in Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, the smell and taste of the bread has elicited a wide range of tales. The ephemeral moments of conversation are stored and accumulated. We become the vessels of narrative shared by the people we meet. In each new city, the *K[ne(e){a}d]* tale expands as conversations trigger memories of stories from past cities. We become travelling bards, repeating memories of stories from many cities.

The ingredients of this project have changed little since the first showing in Normal, Illinois at the Transpace gallery, yet with each iteration we have extended the opportunity for conversation through the baking process. Initially we baked the bread in our homes and brought it, with the moulds, to the gallery every day. For the next installation, in Ohio, we brought an oven into the gallery. We invited viewers not only to eat but also to bake with us. The smell of the bread baking in the gallery proved a powerful mnemonic device. At the Society for Contemporary Craft in Pittsburgh, we not only baked bread in the space, we also linked with a local artisan baker, Larry Lagattuta and used his woodfired oven early every morning. Larry became an integral personality to the project, providing his wood-fired oven, stories of Roman gods and goddesses and a connection between the commercial and art worlds. For the three weeks we were not present, doppelgangers baked for us every weekend, extending the tactile and olfactory aspects of the project in our absence. For the Darmstadt tour, Ute Ritschel, the curator, implemented our request to place an ad in the local Darmstadt newspaper. The ad asked local residents to host English speaking artists to come into their homes

Above left: Two-part hand and forearm, terracotta baking mould. Above right: Bread forearm.

Bit by bit, we rub each section. As we rub the surface until it shines, finger wrapped in dry-cleaning plastic, an odd caressing happens. The repetitive rubbing, chatting, brushing, rubbing, chatting, brushing has not fundamentally changed in twenty millennia. This is also a re-enactment of ceramic history. Sitting and rubbing, we cannot help recall red and black ware, early Chinese terracotta vessels and South American double spouted pots. Museum displays and history book images show the final product, but our connection to these works is a muscular lineage, a lineage of process. We mention this connection, as this project is a series of remembrances of process that, while they change through materials and technology, through action they remain. We are continually re-enacting and re-connecting historical scenarios through the movements of our bodies. Once fired, the moulds take on the look of oiled skin. From use they get spots, streaks and charred from wood fired ovens. Their patina exhibits the memory of heat and function. We think they age well.



and bake bread.

Baking in private homes linked the domesticity of the project to the public space. In the home of an architect and designer, Anke Mensing, we made a few batches of dough while the bread baked. While a novice to baking,

Mensing readily opened her cupboards and embraced the idea that dough is a basic formula from which to deviate. After the initial starter we added ingredients and kneaded until the dough was firm. Mensing rummaged around her spice cabinet and declared somewhat triumphantly, "I want to try lavender." When we handed out her bread at the town square, the lavender became a prompt for future baking projects and past memories, not to mention a subtle and delicate flavour within the bread.

The bread and the moulds are not strictly utilitarian. These objects not only evoke the long history of functional actions, they speak to the history of figurative sculpture. While the right side is Ginsburg and the left is Madrigal, we are not reconstructing a figure, in the classical sense of sculpture. Rather, the figure becomes a temporary sculpture in bread while the moulds become the archival element in clay. The 'negative' elements, the moulds, persist. Resisting the monumental and static form of the body commonly used in public sculpture (think war hero on a horse), we scale the figuration of each loaf to the social gathering around the table. *K[ne(e){a}d]* creates body parts, in multiples, easily shared and given away. The moulds are nomadic elements that allow reproducibility. Rather than immortalizing the figure we focus on the cyclical nature of the lived and social body. And though the moulds function as mere tools in service of the bread, in the long term, the moulds themselves act both as utilitarian objects and as artefacts. *K[ne(e){a}d]* blurs the line between use/non-use, utility/artefact, precious/non-precious, and product/by-product. We are, in a sense, deconstructing traditional sculpture via domestic language and process.

While *K[ne(e){a}d]* can expand to accommodate a variety of spaces and integrate others into the project, it also stands on its own within a gallery. When not present to bake bread, we leave traces of our actions. We quietly amplify the sound of kneading dough. This sound, quiet and disjointed, provides a trace of the action that took place in the space, just as repeated baking is evident in the oily patina on the moulds. We leave our bags of flour, the oven and bowls filled with nuts, dried fruit and seeds. But most importantly, the moulds move from the supplemental role of use objects to objects of inquiry. It is through their form that the story of past activity speaks. The viewer becomes an investigator rather than a participant and the moulds are activated as artefacts. The installation becomes a quiet space, where objects and words dominate rather than actions and speech. We use the gallery tradition of signage to insert information. Through text we leave our open-ended recipe and our nutrition label (nutrition image here). This project fluctuates between object, text and action.

Initially *K[ne(e){a}d]* provided a platform for collaboration, combining our interests in ceramics, food and history. It begins with a moment

Top left: People sharing bread. Darmstadt.

Top right: Shoulder, terracotta baking mould.

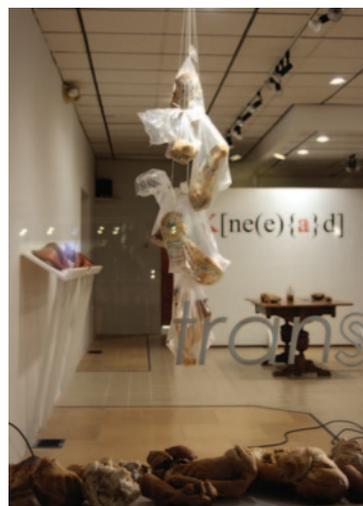
Above: First time baker, Darmstadt.

K[ne(e){a}d] in Action: The performance of the objects.

K[ne(e){a}d] is an exhibition of objects and a performance. When invited to a space, we create an exhibition with our objects, text and sound recordings. When we are present, the space becomes a stage and the terracotta moulds, now props, facilitate our actions. *K[ne(e){a}d]*, in a sense, is a travelling act, not burlesque, but definitely an exhibition of the body. We unpack our kit-baking ingredients, recipe cards, bowls, dishrags and an oven. These elements are the backdrop for performing the terracotta moulds.

In action, the space becomes and interactive and inter-sensory zone. *K[ne(e){a}d]* exemplifies the site of the kitchen and dinner table as open-ended and fluid spaces – spaces that are always in the process of being defined.

in history, the invention of cooking in terracotta. Reframing this particular technological innovation allowed for an experimental encounter with newly minted artefacts. Ultimately *K[ne(e){a}d]* activates the senses of sight, sound, touch and particularly smell, prompting intimate conversations about experience and memory.



Above left: *Bread hand*.
 Above right: *Installation view from the window of the Transpace Gallery, Normal, Illinois*.
 Below: *Nutritional Label*.

Amber Ginsburg recently completed her MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and currently teaches at Columbia College, The University of Chicago and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Her work has been exhibited both internationally and nationally in museums, public squares, galleries, historic sites, artist run spaces and on the sidewalk.

Joe Madrigal earned his MFA from Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. He currently lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan, US and teaches ceramics and sculpture at Kalamazoo College.

The curatorial labour and resourcefulness of Kate Lyndon and Ute Ritschel propelled the projects in Pittsburgh and Darmstadt. We also acknowledge efforts of Melissa Johnson who gave of her form (she cast her hands), her German, her time and labour and her art historical perspective when she became the active performer in Madrigal's absence in Darmstadt.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size 1 slice (44g)	
Servings per container 31	
Amount per serving	
Memory 110	
	% daily value
Labor 85g	48%
Saturated labor 67g	11%
Trans labor 18g	37%
Expectations 14g	10%
Fear 1g	22%
Empiricism 10g	7%
Confidence 22g	13%
Percentage Daily Values are based on a 2,000 memory diet.	
INGREDIENTS: ENRICHED PALIMPSEST, ACCRETION, ONEIRIC, YESTERDAY, HYDROGENATED COMFORT, MONO-TRANSFORMATION, TRISODIUM UNDULATION, ARTIFICIAL SIMULACRUM, ADORATION, INSPIRATION, MONODIHYDROALPHA GLEE	

There are many kitchens and dining rooms in modern homes that function in name only -which is akin to the rupture our performances attempt to mend.

The audience is invited to join the performance. In fact, the performance is the interaction with the audience. Viewers participate in multiple ways, by eating, making or simply being in the space observing or talking. The most common interaction is eating. Piled helter-skelter on a table is our bread, a mix of forms and flavours, rye, wheat oat flours, combined with cardamom, cinnamon, sesame seeds and perhaps some cranberries, moulded into our hands, shoulders, forearms and elbows. The inviting aroma, warm and yeasty straight from the oven, often breaks the discomfort or uncertainty about participating. The smell of fresh bread is friendly, inviting the viewer into the performance.

While people eat, talk and touch the moulds, baking is in full production. We are kneading more dough, checking the oven after the bread is rising nicely. The terracotta moulds are kept well oiled, ready for the next round of dough. Labour and production is interesting. People readily join in. Observers become makers. Soon, one person is mixing with a wooden spoon while another adds more buckwheat flour. The simplicity of the recipe encourages participation. Rather than an exacting science, our bread recipe is a guideline and the audience provides the details.

To make the dough, we begin with 1 cup of water, 1 cup of flour, a teaspoon of salt and dry yeast and a bit of sugar. From these proportions people are invited to add ingredients until the dough loses its stickiness. Everyone is welcome to knead. As they active their upper bodies, and people do notice the labour needed, the connection to the forms becomes more than formal-it is kinesthetic. Their labour becomes future nourishment.

*In this hybrid project, we adapt to the environment of the gallery. In ever increasing ways, *K[ne(e){a}d]* seeks to connect the space of artistic production to the surrounding community. The project has linked with commercial baking space, home ovens, and once, a preschool with a wood fired oven. The need for heat, the oven, becomes a point of contact with the community.*