

Speaker 1:

Hello,

Speaker 2:

Hello.

Speaker 1:

This is final meal request number 309 from July 24th, 2003. Chicken fried steak, gravy, french fries, ketchup, salad, blue cheese dressing, iced tea with lemon, two sodas, rolls and butter.

I want to thank you for having us and our project be part of this conversation tonight, and for this opportunity for listening and learning. When I think [RESA Susie on the block museum 00:00:00:55], It's crucial that cultural institutions share an important role in this community conversation and that in these institutions, we bring our positions, our backgrounds, and our passions to these types of institutions as a way of bringing them out from our homes, our backyards, and our streets. And when I think peanut and CTM J for their critical work that they do with communities directly impacted by the state-sanctioned violence that we're here to discuss today.

This is final meal request number 62 from July 30th, 1992. God's savings grace, love, truth, peace and freedom. Final Meals is a community-based performance and video installation. Each final meal as published by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice since 1982 is prepared, consumed, and filmed. Lucky Pierre cooks recreations of the final meal requests by Texas death row inmates. A volunteer is then videotaped eating the meal. The recorded video is 22 minutes, approximately, an overhead shot in black and white is silent. The food is the focus. What is prepared? What is consumed a final gesture towards a part of the maintenance and comfort. 310 final meals have been published online by the State of Texas. In 2003, the state stopped publicly listing these final meal requests due to so many complaints. And have since stopped offering final meal requests to people who are incarcerated and ultimately executed by the state.

This is final meal request number 39 from May 23rd, 1991. Chicken dumplings, steamed rice, black-eyed peas, slice bread and iced tea. Lucky Pierre is a collaborative group working in writing performance and creating events and visual art. We strive to create structures for engagement with various publics and to explore issues and ideas that accommodate a wide range of experience styles and approaches. Our emphasis is on group learning and is informed by our background in device theater and a studio practice valuing experimentation. Thematically, we've been interested in teasing apart, the romanticized American narrative and its complexities and contradictions. Duration and the marking of time has played an important role in the work. And we have mounted 12 hour performances, marking significant events like the election day in 2012 and the 12th year anniversary of the war in Afghanistan.

This is final meal request number 248 from June 26th, 2001. Chocolate birthday cake with two 2390 written on top, seven pink candles, one coconut, Kiwi fruit juice, pineapple juice, one mango, grapes, lettuce, cottage cheese, peaches, one banana, one delicious apple, chef's salad without meat and with Thousand Island Dressing, fruit salad, cheese and tomato slices. So this piece has been evolving over the past 15 years when it stops and starts, kind of just depends on where we are with our work at the time and what type of invitation we've been giving to mount the work. When we began the self-imposed directive was simple. Lucky Pierre was going to recreate the meals requested that are listed on the Texas Department of Corrections and a member of the group would eat the meal. They would then be videotaped. There were no plans to exhibit the project. It was an internal exercise that we were exploring. Many of the formal or conceptual choices were informed by logistics and limitations.

The black and white video choice was a response to the range of lighting situations where the videos were filmed. The video is silent because of ambient noise beyond our control. Their overhead shot obscures the identity of the person eating or sitting with the meal. This allows for the emphasis to be placed on the food and the meal request. The 25 minute duration of each video was dictated by the original length of the video tapes being used for filming. We have about five different formats that we've filmed the meals over the 15 years. As we continue to work on the final meals, we began to solicit volunteers to participate in the project. We reached out to our networks in our communities, seeking out people to sit with or eat the meal. Sometimes they helped cook the meal requests. People were drawn to the project for a variety of reasons.

We began to structure the emphasis on the body and the individual participant joining the project. We structured it and invited them to the space, a quiet and reflective space and a transitional room before they entered and sat down with the meal and then sat by themselves thinking about the meal and what was being presented to them. We were thinking about the individual body and how the participant being filmed used the final meal request as a bridge to the history and the person that it represented and how the particular choices of the items that they requested related to their own memories and past histories and even geographical location of where they grew up in and how it was a connection to comfort that individual's comfort.

We structured the transition to and from the solitary experience and the sitting with the final meal request and how that could then potentially transition to a shared space. After the filming of final meals, typically, then we will have a communal meal and invite those participants to sit together at the civic space of the shared communal dining room table and reflect on and discuss on their individual experiences and how that relates to our collective social space.

Speaker 2:

Okay.

Speaker 1:

This is final meal request number 308 from July 23rd, 2003. Meal declined.

Speaker 2:

Okay.

Speaker 1:

This is final meal request number 290 from October 1st, 2002. One pot of coffee. And this is a reflection from a participant who sat with that meal and wrote about it in the guests book that we provide concluding that session. One pot of coffee, no cream, no sugar, we do not know. It just said one pot of coffee. How many days, how many years have passed between that pot of coffee and this one? Was it bitter? Was there a window there like there is here? What time of day was it? Were they at least polite to him? The aftertaste of coffee on the tongue, there's an aftertaste. I am writing this after the filming. The room is not silent, members of Lucky Pierre in the kitchen behind me talking as they prepare the meal for the next filming. The next person, there's so many, so many meals. I do not know his name. I do not know where he was from. Did he have children or living parents? Did they drink coffee together with cream and sugar? We do not know. Thank you.