

The Last Supper

The Last Supper is an installation of china (mineral) painted plates illustrating final meal requests of death row inmates in the United States. This on-going body of work began in 1999 in Norman, Oklahoma. At that time, I was disturbed to find the final menus printed in the morning paper at the time of each execution. The daily Norman Transcript included Associated Press releases such as:

His right foot, clad in a blue slipper, shook nervously.... After officials began administering the drugs at 12:09 a.m., Johnson blinked three times and let out a breath through puffed cheeks. His foot stopped shaking. His eyes slowly dimmed, became glassy and closed to a crescent.... He asked for a final meal of three fried chicken thighs, 10 or 15 shrimp, tater tots with ketchup, two slices of pecan pie, strawberry ice cream, honey and biscuits and a Coke.

To date, over 300 plates are completed. Each state with death penalty executions is included in *The Last Supper*. I have collected several hundred more menus and continue to paint plates. Toni Acock is the technical advisor for the plates. Colin Murphey and I collaborated to produce the video. *The Last Supper* was first displayed in England in 2000. It traveled to University of California at Santa Cruz; Copia: The American Center of Food, Wine and the Arts in California; Oregon State University; and Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle, Washington. In 2003, I was interviewed about *The Last Supper* project on the National Public Radio program *The Splendid Table*. In 2005, the plates were shown at Hunter Museum of American Art in Tennessee. 2006 exhibitions include Living Arts, Tulsa, Oklahoma; Fort Collins MOCA, Colorado; Art and Design Gallery and Spencer Museum of Art, The University of Kansas. 2007 shows include Mulvane Museum of Art, Topeka, Kansas and DiverseWorks in Houston, Texas.

Because of the content, *The Last Supper* is challenging to produce and may be challenging to view. While painting, I think about the death penalty, the victims, the heinous crimes committed, the individuals executed, the large number of minorities on death row, and the margin for error in judicial process. I think about food, choice, and whether inmates are able to eat the food they order. Specific food requests, often regional specialties, sometimes tell where the individual lived and may provide clues on the one's race and economic level. Inmates in some states are limited to food available in the prison kitchen. There is a great deal of red meat but few lobsters, and no sushi or Godiva chocolates. I make art as a way of processing information. I am opposed to the death penalty and hope this piece will help generate discussion that could result in positive change.

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Statistics from The Death Penalty Information Center on 1 June 2008 www.deathpenaltyinfo.org
TOTAL U.S. STATE-SANCTIONED EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976 **1102**

NUBERS OF STATE EXECUTIONS SINCE 1976	2 OREGON
405 TEXAS	1 CONNECTICUT
99 VIRGINIA	1 COLORADO
86 OKLAHOMA	1 IDAHO
66 MISSOURI	1 NEW MEXICO
64 FLORIDA	1 WYOMING
43 N CAROLINA	1 SOUTH DAKOTA
41 GEORGIA	0 NEW HAMPSHIRE
37 S CAROLINA	0 KANSAS
38 ALABAMA	3 <i>U.S Federal Government</i>
27 LOUISIANA	
27 ARKANSAS	
26 OHIO	States without the death penalty
23 ARIZONA	0 ALASKA
19 INDIANA	0 HAWAII
14 DELAWARE	0 IOWA
13 CALIFORNIA	0 MAINE
12 NEVADA	0 MASSACHUSETTS
12 ILLINOIS	0 MICHIGAN
9 MISSISSIPPI	0 MINNESOTA
6 UTAH	0 NEW YORK
5 MARYLAND	0 NEW JERSEY
4 WASHINGTON	0 NORTH DAKOTA
4 TENNESSEE	0 RHODE ISLAND
3 MONTANA	0 VERMONT
3 NEBRASKA	0 WEST VIRGINIA
3 PENNSYLVANIA	0 WISCONSIN
2 KENTUCKY	0 WASHINGTON, DC