

40 YEARS  
KALDOR PUBLIC  
ART PROJECTS

1973  
MIRALDA



# 1973 MIRALDA

## PROJECT

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### Coloured feast

18 September 1973

John Kaldor Fabricmaker showrooms, Sydney

### Coloured bread

21 September – 4 October 1973

Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

**It's easy to establish a dialogue with food because it belongs to all at every level. You can communicate with children in the Communist suburbs of Paris – or with the Ninth Avenue audience in New York or with sophisticated museum people in Europe ... Food is in the middle of everything and is connected with human behaviour.**

Linda Montana, *Performance artists talking in the eighties*,  
University of California, Berkeley 2001, p 185

MIRALDA

Miralda preparing and baking  
**Coloured bread** 1973 for the  
Art Gallery of NSW

Photo: Douglas Thompson  
Courtesy Art Gallery of New South Wales



# 1973 MIRALDA

Far from the hypnotic society of spectacle, Miralda offers a participatory form of social behaviour based in the particularity of human interaction and an economics of festive exchange ... For Miralda, culture is not isolated within the walls of institutions; it resides in the public domain of shared social rituals, most importantly the meal.

William Jeffet, 'Fragments from *Tastes and tongues: 13 cities* (2002)', Seacex, [www.seacex.com](http://www.seacex.com)

## INTRODUCTION

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Miralda explores the connections between art and culture. He creates art events based on everyday rituals. Once of the first artists to conceive large-scale spectacles, he has staged numerous displays and parades for exhibitions, biennales, festivals and public events over his four-decade career, including for the Munich Olympics. He is perhaps best known for his edible art, which has ranged from landscapes in meringue to coloured banquets. In 1973, Miralda created an installation of coloured bread and a multicoloured feast in Sydney as a Kaldor project.

## ARTIST

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### Antoni Miralda

born 1942 in Barcelona, Spain

lives and works in Barcelona and Miami, Florida, USA

Miralda has divided his career between Spain, France and the United States. He moved to Paris from Barcelona, but was conscripted back to Spain for compulsory military service for two years. Following his return to France in 1967, the theme for his first works was, not surprisingly, military: regiments of white toy soldiers marching in columns onto copies of famous sculptures like the Venus de Milo. In the overheated political context of May 1968 Paris and the Vietnam War, these *Soldats soldés* (Soldiers on sale) were highly charged and provocative.

Up until 1971 Miralda, working in tandem with his wife Dorotheé Selz, was involved in carnivalesque events. Choosing 1 November – All Souls Day on the Christian calendar, also known as All Hallows or Halloween, which becomes Halloween – Miralda commemorated the departed with purple and black food (borscht, fish and rice). Invited to the 1971 Biennale of Paris, Miralda prepared an enormous banquet table with multicoloured piles of bread, rice, cauliflower and corn cobs served by masked figures dressed in primary colours.

His monumental project *Honeymoon* was constructed from 1986 to 1992 in celebration of the 'marriage' between the Statue of Liberty in New York and the statue of Christopher Columbus in Barcelona. There is a film that recounts the preparation of the bride's trousseau (on a scale with the Statue of Liberty), and the ceremony itself in Las Vegas, the capital of American kitsch. It is the marriage of the contrasting symbols: conquest and freedom.

## PROJECT

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Miralda met John Kaldor in 1972 at the apartment of his friends and fellow artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude. Kaldor invited Miralda to create works in Australia in 1973 for the opening of his new John Kaldor Fabricmaker showrooms, designed by artist Mike Kitching, in the Sydney suburb of Surry Hills. An art event combining performance and interaction, it was attended by around 300 people. Leslie Walford described *Coloured feast* for the *Sun Herald* (23 Sept 1973): 'The mayonnaise was purple, the sausages blue. The cauliflowers were red or pink or green. The jellies were psychedelic. The paté was turquoise, the corn on the cob sky blue.' Was it the first work of art ever eaten in Australia?

While Miralda was still in Australia, Daniel Thomas, then senior curator at the Art Gallery of NSW, took the opportunity to present a new work by the artist in the Gallery's entrance court. Created with the help of local bakers, *Coloured bread* was a banquet table of rolls and plaited breads in green, red, blue and yellow.

## WORLD EVENTS: 1973

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- \_ US troops pull out of Vietnam
- \_ Patrick White wins Nobel Prize for Literature
- \_ Sydney Opera House opens
- \_ Mobile phone invented
- \_ Lucy Lippard publishes the book *Six years: the dematerialization of the art object 1966 to 1972*
- \_ Walter Benjamin's influential 1936 essay 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' published in English
- \_ National Gallery of Australia controversially buys Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles*
- \_ First Biennale of Sydney held at the Sydney Opera House Gallery
- \_ **3rd Kaldor project:** Gilbert & George present *The Singing Sculpture* and exhibit *The Shrubberies* at the Art Gallery of NSW and Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria
- \_ **4th Kaldor project:** Miralda creates *Coloured feast* at the John Kaldor Fabricmaker showrooms in Sydney and *Coloured bread* at the Art Gallery of NSW

## THEME

### Food and art

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The eating experience intersects the personal and the shared, combining childhood habits and adult fantasies. A companion is someone you break bread with (from the Latin *com* – with – and *panis* – bread). Public eating cements social trust. Originally, eating rituals involved proving to a host that the guest trusted he or she would not be poisoned; the host ate from the same pot to show he hadn't poisoned it. The sharing of food has often been less concerned with satisfying hunger than with diplomacy.

Today, nothing gives you such a chilling sense of capitalist production than the chemical landscape of agribusiness – from baby chickens receiving hormone injections and recombinant fruit that ships well but tastes like the truck it rode in, to petrochemical industries coating seeds with fluorescent fertiliser so they can plant at night. Nothing tells you more about simulation than olestra, an entirely synthetic oil made of sucrose polyester. Nothing defines the hyper-real so much as the MacDonald's cover version of hamburgers: the way they taste like tomato sauce, pickle, sugary bread, and are held together by a warm elastic paste (they're an impression of a hamburger, not a hamburger). And nothing defines postmodernism so much as restaurant menu descriptions that are more scrumptious and filling than the food itself.

Food is a rich source not only of kilojoules and vitamins, but of metaphors. Metaphors are the way we bridge our realities and fantasies, and the stock-in-trade for artists. In medieval times, for example, the vices and virtues associated with food led to allegorical treatments, and lives poised between certainty and shortage provided the platform for the value given to food in premodern Europe.

**See:** Pieter Bruegel *The fight between Carnival and Lent* 1559  
In the Christian calendar, Lent is a period of enforced abstinence and spiritual purification leading up to Easter. It is represented in Bruegel's painting by an emaciated man on a cart, while the figure of Carnival rides a wine barrel, wearing a pie on his head.

**See:** Giuseppe Arcimboldo (1527–1593)  
Italian painter Arcimboldo's regal faces composed of fruit or seafood were greatly admired by his Renaissance contemporaries who loved riddles and puzzle paintings, and remain a source of fascination today.

**See:** Caravaggio *Basket of fruit* c1595–1600  
This work by another Italian painter, Caravaggio, is one of the first examples of pure still life. The term 'still life' only appeared during the middle of the 17th century; before 1650, people spoke of fruit, banquet or luncheon paintings.

**See:** Abraham Mignon (1640–1679)

German painter Mignon encoded a Christian message in his work, especially references to the Eucharist, with its idea of eating the body and blood of Jesus Christ through the symbols of bread and wine. In his *Still-life*, painted after 1672 and now in the Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne, images of ephemerality (flies and snails perforating the plants) are countered by grapes on a vine and their promise of eternal life.

**See:** Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944)

Marinetti was the founder of the futurist movement, publishing its manifesto in 1909. He recognised that 'men think, dream and act according to what they eat and drink' so cooking and eating needed to become subservient to the proper aesthetic experience that futurism favored. Marinetti's recipe for *carneplastico*, 'an original dish suggesting the Italian landscape': Surround a tall, upright cylinder of minced veal stuffed with 11 vegetables by a ring of sausages draped between large balls of minced chicken. Crown the whole with golden honey.

**See:** Daniel Spoerri (b1930)

Spoerri is known for his 'snare-pictures' – assemblages of objects which often include the remains of meals. The theme of food extends further in his work, in an area he calls 'Eat art'. He has, like Miralda, established restaurants as art projects and has published *Mythology and meatballs: a Greek island diary cookbook*. In 1961 he sold in an art gallery store-bought canned food that he had signed and stamped with 'Attention: Work of Art'.

Then there are the conceptual and performance takes on the subject. Artists like Joseph Beuys and Wolfgang Laib have used rice, honey, salt, pollen, chocolate, fettuccine, banana splits, pizzas and noodles in their work. Restaurateur Gay Bilson cooked large quantities of food on a Solstice evening for the cost of the bowl, emphasising the Eucharistic and communitarian origins of eating: *Mutatio carnis in spiritum* (Take eat, this is my body). Likewise, AIDS activist Felix Gonzalez-Torres at the Sydney Biennale in 1996 had spills of gold-wrapped candy fill an entire room, inviting viewers to eat the work.

Another contemporary tributary has been food as abject, yucky and disgusting. From Cindy Sherman's de-luxe cibachromes of food going off or Hany Armanious' polychrome plastic *informe*, we're back at a certain medievalism, where food becomes the site of a neurotic terror – this time, about weight.

## COLLECTION CONNECTIONS

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### Relevant works in the Art Gallery of NSW collection

[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection)

- **Jacky Redgate** (England; Australia, b1955)

*Big fish eat little fish from the series naar het Schilder-boeck*  
1984–85

gelatin silver photograph, sandblasted glass; 97 x 97.5 cm (sight)  
Purchased 1986 302.1986

The title refers to the medieval and Renaissance source books of symbols and subjects for art, systems through which painters could find a suitable iconography. The source for Redgate's series is actually an oil painting by Pieter Bruegel from 1559 known as Netherlandish proverbs or sometimes as *The blue cloa*. In Redgate's work, the popular proverb 'big fish eat little fish' is illustrated with a large fish which has been sliced open, with smaller fish spilling from its belly and either into or out of its mouth.

- **Ernesto Neto** (Brazil, b1964)

*Just like drops in time, nothing* 2002

textile, spices; dimensions variable  
Purchased with assistance from Clayton Utz 2002 276.2002

The body and its senses are integral to Neto's work; his installations stretch the membrane that separates art and life. Neto's use of transparent elastic fabric describes the tension of spaces he invades while anthropomorphising architecture. Vast masses of fragrant spice swell the fabric in voluptuous, almost bodily, forms that fill the gallery space and our olfactory organs with its aromatic intensity. Unlike vision, smell entails the physical invasion of the body by the scent's particles. In this way the sensations evoked by Neto's spice works are involuntary and almost instinctive.

- **Laurens Craen** (Netherlands, born c1620, died c1665–71)

*Still life with imaginary view* c1645–50

oil on panel; 63.4 x 85.3 cm (board)  
Gift of Sir Arthur Downes in memory of his uncle JF Downes and of his cousin FWA Downes HLA 1929 552

- **Ricky Swallow** (Australia, b1974)

*Killing time* 2003–4

laminated Jelutong, maple; 108 x 184 x 118 cm (irreg)  
Rudy Komon Memorial Fund and the Contemporary Collection Benefactors 2004 125.2004

- **Herbert Badham** (Australia, b1899, d1961)

*Breakfast piece* 1936

oil on hardboard; 59 x 71 cm (board)  
Purchased 1936 6381

- **William Scott** (Scotland; Northern Ireland; England, b1913, d1989)

*Frying pan and eggs* 1949

oil on canvas; 63.5 x 76.2 cm (stretcher)  
Purchased 1952 8738

- **Michael Riley** (Australia, b1960, d2004)

*Untitled (row of eight fish) from the series Sacrifice* 1992

gelatin silver photograph; 15.5 x 22 cm (sight)  
Purchased 1993 398.1993

## SELECTED REFERENCES

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- \_ Norman Bryson, *Looking at the overlooked: four essays on still life painting*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass 1990
- \_ Sophie Forbat (ed), *40 years: Kaldor Public Art Projects*, Kaldor Public Art Projects, Sydney 2009
- \_ Claire Joyes, *Monet's table: the cooking journals of Claude Monet*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1989
- \_ Charles Sterling, *Still life painting from antiquity to the twentieth century*, Harper and Row, New York 1981

### Websites

- \_ Kaldor Public Art Projects  
[www.kaldorartprojects.org.au](http://www.kaldorartprojects.org.au)
- \_ Kaldor Public Art Projects Explorer, Art Gallery of NSW  
[www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/kaldor\\_projects](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/kaldor_projects)
- \_ Food Culture Museum  
[www.foodculturemuseum.com](http://www.foodculturemuseum.com)
- \_ Sabores y Lenguas  
[www.foodcultura.org/SYL/info.html](http://www.foodcultura.org/SYL/info.html)

# ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

Miralda's Kaldor project used food as its material and subject. Investigate the role food plays in various cultures. Create a list of ceremonies and events where food plays a role, both in your life and on a wider community level. Is it true to say that food is a universal subject that can connect all people? Propose other universal subjects that artists have explored, and discuss why they have this broad appeal.

Investigate Miralda's larger body of work, including his most recent work, and assess the issues and themes he has explored, with a particular focus on cultural issues. Is there a consistent thread of investigation? Discuss the development of an artist's body of work. Is it a progression and exploration of essentially similar issues and ideas or are there radical shifts in direction? Present a case study of two artists who have taken these different paths.

Look closely at the photo-documentation of Miralda's Kaldor project. Critically analyse *Coloured feast* and *Coloured bread*. How would you categorise each – as sculpture, installation or performance? Outline and justify your position. How does the material and presentation of the work confound and confuse the viewer as to whether this work is art or simply a set table of food? Discuss the aspects of the work that indicate its true nature or intention.

Consider the composition of the works. Investigate how Miralda has deliberately organised the tables of food in the same way a painter would. Examine how colour, shape, texture and form have been organised to create a cohesive whole. While the composition of a painting can lead the viewer's eye, a work of this nature also encourages the viewer to be physically led. Imagine how the audience would have encountered this work and what their response may have been. Propose how you, as an audience member, would approach this work (including your starting point and direction) and explain why. Discuss if the action and reaction of the audience is or could be part of the artwork and the artist's intention.

*Coloured feast* was developed not just to be viewed but also to be eaten. Propose what the audience's response may have been to this proposition. In what ways is Miralda subverting the codes for the presentation of art in museums through his works and the engagement he asks of his audience? What is left of this artwork at the conclusion of its presentation? Would you consider Miralda's edible art as ephemeral?

Miralda's use of colour is one of his signature elements, so much so it is incorporated into the titles in his Kaldor project. Outline the significance and symbolism of particular colours, and their impact. Propose how the audience may have perceived the food once dyed. Discuss how the simple act of changing the colour has transformed everyday food items and made them extraordinary. Discuss the role of the artist in helping audiences to see differently the world they think they know.

Consider how Miralda's Kaldor project is consistent with other Kaldor projects around this time. How does it reflect an interest in the key issues of the art world of the 1970s? What were these issues? Identify contemporary artists who are concerned with similar issues today.

Investigate the role of collaboration in *Coloured feast* and *Coloured food* in relation to the development of the works, the making of the food and its presentation. How is this in keeping with Miralda's focus on food as a linking subject across people and locations? This Kaldor project was presented in Sydney at the launch of the John Kaldor Fabricmaker showrooms in the inner-city suburb of Surry Hills and at the Art Gallery of NSW. Consider the audiences in each venue and how the differing contexts might have affected the way that people viewed and understood the works.

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to celebrate the opening of the John  
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Photo: Douglas Thompson. Courtesy  
Kaldor Public Art Projects

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