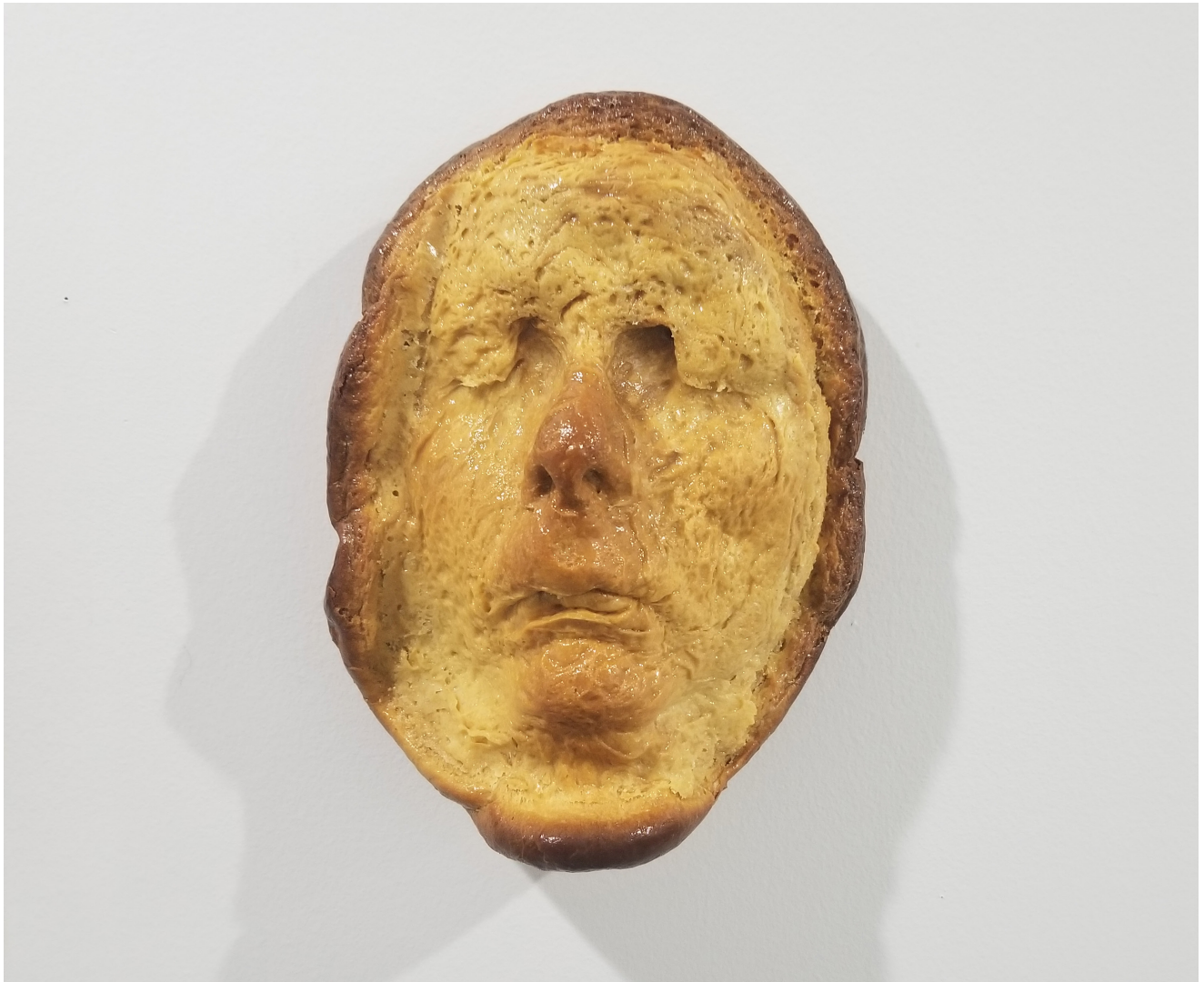


ALEXANDER JOSE LUIS RAMIREZ

2022 ART & ART HISTORY
MFA THESIS EXHIBITION



DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

MAY 6-20, 2022

2022 ART & ART HISTORY MFA THESIS EXHIBITION

The *2022 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* features the thesis works of the MFA candidates in Columbia College Chicago's Art and Art History Department. The exhibition, which includes artists' books, prints, drawings, sculptures, photography, sound, projections, and installation works, represents the culmination of two years of development on a cohesive body of work for each artist.

Participating artists:

Kelsey Bogdan

John Bolin

Caitlyn Doran

Samantha Trace Foster

Anna Lipscomb

Alexander Jose Luis Ramirez

Chris Tasiar

Megan VanKanegan

The *2022 Art and Art History MFA Thesis Exhibition* is presented in conjunction with the Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), the Department of Art and Art History, and Paul Catanese, Director of Graduate Studies for Art and Art History.

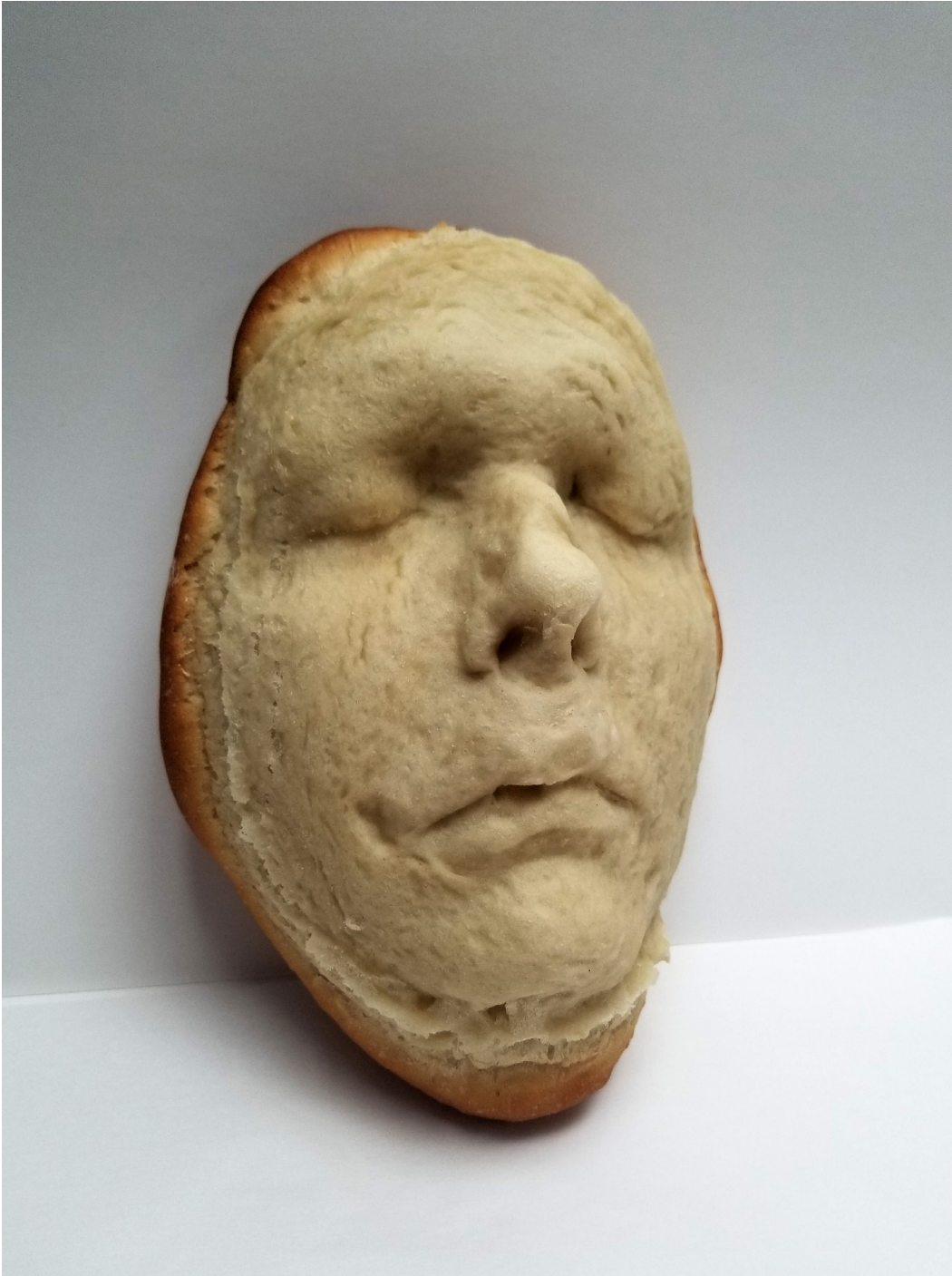
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In Ramirez's thesis project, *Breaded Judgment (Bread Faces)*, they are creating multiples of their face using edible materials, including bread and chocolate, which are then consumed by Ramirez and offered to others to eat during public performances. These consumable self-portraits are intended to be shared and devoured, as a form of coming to terms with their frustration and stress caused by my connection to a historically proven toxic and morally hypocritical culture; specifically, the Cuban community in Miami, Florida where they grew up.

Alexander Jose Luis Ramirez is a multidisciplinary artist from Miami, Florida, who creates sculptural forms in digital media, food, and metal. Ramirez uses sculpture and performance to take jabs at the Catholic church, Cuban culture, and conservative views to emphasize the continual delusion that leads to their self-destruction. Ramirez is completing an MFA at Columbia College Chicago in Spring 2022.



To Break, 2021, photo courtesy of the artist



To Break, 2021, photo courtesy of the artist



To Break, 2021, photo courtesy of the artist



To Break, 2021, photo courtesy of the artist



To Break, 2021, photo courtesy of the artist

INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER JOSE LUIS RAMIREZ

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

Kaylee Fowler: How did you get started using food and edible materials as part of your practice?

Alexander Jose Luis Ramirez: At the beginning of the pandemic. I had learned how to make bread since I had the time and I was consistently making bread weekly. So, after getting more of a handle on the process of baking I began experimenting with different ideas of how to use it in art. The social aspect of eating with friends and family was a big influence on why I went in this direction at first because I missed the togetherness that was lost through the isolation Covid brought to my life. The first project I did with bread began with baking bread for friends and family, and then asking them to make a meal and an associated art piece from the bread as the beginning of a conversation through the bread. The results were vastly different every time due to each respective piece's content since I allowed the participant's artistic license to tackle whatever they wanted.

KF: I'm curious about the ephemeral nature of your work, and what the concept of a labored object being literally consumed by the artist and its viewers means for the pieces conceptually; can you tell me more about how you think about this overlap of material and concept and the relationship between you, the audience, and the object?

AR: The short answer would be that you are what you eat to an extent. The mindset I use normally when I come into the performance is that I am consuming myself to absorb and digest the parts that are undesirable to me either morally or physically within the piece. Since this is a portrait of myself, it is taking the place of a version of myself that I no longer can identify with. In that, I try to move past it by eating the ideological portions of my identity I don't condone anymore. Giving it away on the other hand is more of an act of charity for the self. When I give it away I try to give the best version of myself I can give

at the time. Normally when I do this outside of a performance. I am consistently baking and giving food away to the people closest to me. In this performance, I am trying to bring the audience into my headspace and closer to my point of view. The ultimate success of the piece hinges on the conversations that can erupt from the interactions.

KF: You grew up in the Cuban community in Miami, Florida, the culture of which has inspired your work; how has living in Chicago while you work on your MFA impacted your practice, if at all, or changed how you approached it materially or conceptually?

AR: Materially, Chicago in general has opened up a lot of new avenues to make work that I had not originally considered. In Miami, I was a bit stubborn about changing my ways to fit into my idea of what an artist or sculptor should be. My art practice in Chicago became vastly different than the one I previously had back home. This is due to the inability to create in my normal means of creating work, which was in Metal. I did not have the same resources I had prior which made it difficult to do the work I was accustomed to. So, I had to adapt and pursue a different passion that was productive which became cooking and baking. In general, I have always conceptually tackled the artwork with a material first mentality. This resulted in the concepts changing when I started baking bread which is the root of the idea. The major thing I had not considered is that no matter what I do food is always political object when it's used in art. This is because food is what binds a culture together more than many other aspects before theology gets involved because food and meals are linked inherently to family and heritage.



THE DEPS ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The DEPS Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with, and support the arts community. The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistants Kaylee Fowler and Sierra Delamarter. Graphic design is managed by DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Gray Beyer. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: colum.edu/deps

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