

CRISTIN TIERNEY

MK Guth: Menu

September 13 – October 26, 2019

Opening Reception: September 13, 6:00 to 8:00 pm

Cristin Tierney Gallery is pleased to present **Menu**, an exhibition of new performance-based works by **MK Guth**. *Menu* opens Friday, September 13th with a reception from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. The artist will be present. It continues through Saturday, October 26th.

Menu presents a selection of evocatively-titled sculptures: *Dinner to Tell a Joke*, *Menu for Getting There*, *Menu for Getting What You Want*, *Dinner for Getting Over It Or At Least Getting Through It*, and *Menu for a Table*. The menus are handmade books of instructions for various actions. The dinners are assemblages of items to be activated in performances that double as communal meals. Although each work offers a different experience for the viewer, all draw from gastronomic culture. *Dinner to Tell a Joke* is a silver cloth-bound book that comes with six shiny red cups doubling as drink glasses and clown noses. The dinner is designed around humor as a form of release, political statement, criticism, response to horrific events, societal change or simply the need to laugh.



The “Small Plates” section of *Menu for Getting What You Want* instructs the reader to “Cast your line / Keep your eye on the line / Be patient / Be willing to wait / Wait some more / Do not give up.” Under the header “Main Entrée,” the action ramps up: “Pay attention / When you feel a tug on the line, ACT / Do not miss your opportunity / Have the net ready.” A watercolor of a man holding a fish he has caught adorns the flip side of the book.

Although informative, neither the menus nor the dinners function as ostensibly intended. Some directions in the menus are abstract, while others are impossible to carry out as written. The dinners similarly pursue an objective that is conceptual not concrete. All require the participant’s imagination, whether filling in blanks or considering other ways that Guth’s prompts could be applied. Depending on each viewer’s perspective, a variety of interpretations is possible for every work.

Also significant in *Menu* is Guth’s use of a culinary framework, which functions two-fold. First, the artist’s tasks follow an order of progression that mimics the typical sequencing of a multi-course meal. Presented as a starter, entrée, or dessert course, each prompt gains ancillary meaning according to what it precedes or follows. Second, it underscores the shared nature of the experience. Dining, like performance, is often undertaken with others present. Both are interactive sites of exchange, requiring give-and-take between actor and participant, host and guest. Guth’s sculptures likewise depend on a social context for activation; assigned tasks invite viewers to involve themselves in the work, forming a provisional performative

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community. By encouraging this exchange, *Menu* continues Guth's ongoing exploration of relational aesthetics, bringing people into conversation through shared rituals.

MK Guth (b. 1963, Stevens Point, WI) works in video, photography, sculpture, performance, and interactive projects. She has exhibited internationally at numerous museums and festivals including The Whitney Museum of American Art, Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Schneider Museum of Art, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Melbourne International Arts Festival, Nottdance Festival, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, The Art Gym at Marylhurst University, Frye Art Museum, and The Henry Art Gallery at the University of Washington. She is a founding member of the Red Shoe Delivery Service, an ongoing collaborative performance project with artists Molly Dilworth and Cris Moss. Currently, the artist's installation *Ties of Protection and Safe Keeping* is on view in the exhibition *Dread & Delight: Fairy Tales in an Anxious World* through September 22nd at the Akron Art Museum. In May 2020, she will do a special performance at UCLA's Powell Library with the Center for the Art of Performance. Guth is the Director of the Hallie Ford School of Graduate Studies and interim Chair of the Critical Studies Program at the Pacific Northwest College of Art. She lives and works in Portland, OR.

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