

BREAD

ALEXANDER AITKEN, MAGDA BLASINSKA, VÁCLAV BUCHTELÍK, LUCILE HAEFFLINGER,
ABIGAIL HAMPSEY, HYNEK MARTINEC, MIROSLAV POMICHAL, OLHA PRYMAK, JOHN STARK

BREAD invites us to explore the complex role of the humble yet powerful grain—wheat, as both an essential ingredient that pervades cultures and a force that has shaped the development of societies and geopolitics.



The cultivation of wheat played a pivotal role in shaping the course of human civilization, influencing settlement patterns, population growth, and contributing to the rise of dominant nations. In the words of Jared Diamond ‘food production was the crucial factor in the development of settled societies, states, and ultimately empires.’ The author explored the role of agriculture, including the cultivation of crops like wheat, in shaping the destinies of societies in ‘Guns, Germs, and Steel’ (1997). He argues that the availability of certain crops and domesticable animals significantly influenced the development of civilizations, leading to inequalities in power and technology among different regions.

The establishment of sedentary societies was facilitated by the cultivation of wheat, this shift from nomadic lifestyles to settled agriculture allowed for population growth, surplus food production, and the development of complex social structures. Wheat’s ability to thrive in diverse environments contributed to its widespread adoption, shaping the agricultural practices of many societies. As societies became more reliant on wheat and other staple crops, the geopolitical landscape was also transformed. The control of fertile land for agriculture became a strategic asset, leading to territorial disputes, conflicts, and the rise of powerful agrarian civilizations. Wheat production, therefore, became not only an economic foundation but also a geopolitical tool that influenced the balance of power.

The war in Ukraine exemplifies the geopolitical significance of agriculture. The region’s rich agricultural land, often referred to as the “breadbasket of Europe,” has historically been a source of contention. The ongoing conflict involves complex geopolitical factors, including control over resources, political influence, and territorial integrity. In the context of the war in Ukraine, one might draw parallels to Diamond’s thesis, highlighting how the control and utilization of agricultural resources, akin to the role of wheat in earlier civilizations, continue to play a crucial role in shaping geopolitical struggles. The competition for control over fertile land and resources underscores the enduring significance of agriculture in contemporary geopolitics.

The influence of wheat on the development of societies and geopolitics is a multifaceted and enduring phenomenon. From the ancient roots of settled agriculture to modern conflicts over fertile land, the cultivation of wheat has shaped the course of human history and continues to influence geopolitical dynamics in diverse ways. BREAD encourages contemplation on the interconnectivity of cultures, societies, and the profound influence that something as simple as wheat can have on the course of human history. Some works draw parallels between wheat and concepts of fertility, healing, and abundance found in ancient civilizations, while others delve into the ritualistic use of wheat in ceremonies and festivals.

ALEXANDER AITKEN

ALEXANDER AITKEN (b. 1994, London) is a ceramic sculptor and draftsman living and working in London. Their practice is broadly concerned with the lost or unnoticed narratives we encounter in our environment and society, creating work that aims to create eccentric nodes in a pursuit to encourage an audience question and heighten awareness toward the unnoticed and fundamental of their local situation. The themes flit, from the subtle everyday violences and romances to the expansive agricultural landscape; but all lock in an observed, remixed and amplified surrounding. Alex was the 2021-2023 RCA Griffin Scholar, ROSL 2023 Prize Winner and 2023 CA Resident. Alexander's ceramic titles in BREAD are enveloped with bread 'serving as a tangible tether to the foundational elements of society, echoing the transition to agriculture and its role in cultural rituals, curses and sacraments.' The titles depicting 'a spectrum of themes – from the primal forces of sex and violence to the complexities of religion, power dynamics, and love. Scenes teem with turmoil, as shifting hierarchies are delineated amidst a backdrop of blood, passion, and mysticism. Amidst the grit of labor and the weight of societal expectations, pleasure and pain entwine in a dark fantastical kaleidoscope of human experience.'



Startled Horse, 2023.
Ceramic, bread,
35 x 12 cm.
PRICE: £500



Swimmer, 2023.
Ceramic, bread,
30 x 25 cm. PRICE:
£450



Moon, 2023.
Ceramic, bread,
40 x 25 cm.
PRICE: £670



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31.01 - 17.02 2024

MAGDA BLASINSKA

MAGDA BLASINSKA (Ilza, Poland) draws from the fragmented memories of the artist's post - Soviet upbringing in rural Poland and her day to day experience of living in the UK. Primarily a painter, Blasinska builds the world of light and tactile surfaces, utilising humble and physically insubstantial materials such as painting with air and weaving with straw. Her shimmering, immersive installations navigate somewhere between Magical Realism and Arte Povera, creating illusive effect and providing a context to her painting. In parallel to her thatch and hand-woven wheat reed installations, Blasinska's painting methodically highlights the physical presence of the human hand. The linen supports are stretched and prepared by hand. Rich textures and canvas depths are achieved thanks to slow application of layers of highly pigmented oil paint, elevating the artist's interest in alchemical properties of painting.



Shapeshifter II, 2024.
Wheat reed thatch on wooden frame
(site specific installation), 195 x 120 x 120 cm.
NFS



Sweet Dream, 2023.
Oil on linen, 24 x 20 cm.
PRICE: £1400



Sweet Tooth, 2023.
Oil on linen, 24 x 20 cm.
PRICE: £1400

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VÁCLAV BUCHTELÍK

VÁCLAV BUCHTELÍK (b. 1990, Karviná, Czech Republic) focuses on personal “myth” and uses symbols to express his experiences, which are very important for his functioning in the medium of painting. The subject of Buchtelík’s paintings is often various forms of anxiety or terror, the other side of human existence or the ambivalent atmosphere in society. The latter is represented through scenes where the artist places figures on a demonic background, full of clouds of smoke and erupting volcanoes, which give an uninvolved, almost calm and serene impression. In this way, a society (in Buchtelík’s paintings it is often a socialist society) is figuratively depicted looking paralysed towards the destructive forces. This contrast of anxiety and calm, together with the ambiguity of the scenes, the mere hints and references, creates the inner tension that is so appealing in Buchtelík’s paintings.



Harvester, 2023.
Oil on canvas, 50 x 40 cm.
PRICE: £950

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LUCILE HAEFFLINGER

LUCILE HAEFFLINGER (b. 1996, France) grew up with their hands in the dirt and the leaves, caring for the smallest specks on the floor. Lucile studied Textile and Text at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam (2019) and drawing at the Royal Drawing School, London (2019-21). Lucile is now based in Woolwich where they paint and sculpt from memories and observation. They feel an urge to contain escaping memories and feelings, whilst expressing the alienation of experiencing their own body in relation to their surroundings and other non-human beings. The paintings in BREAD are based on ink drawings Lucile made of old agricultural machinery whilst on residency at Borgo Pignano, Italy. They had been left, rusting in the middle of a small patch of dry grass. Probably as an ornament and a reminder of the first utility of the land before being a place of leisure for rich people. Bones in the desert. The wheels, rib cage and the seat, a skull on a spike. They felt lonely, abandoned under the heavy blue sky.



love you, confused, 2024. Oil paint and oil pastel on wood panel, framed, 38 x 36 cm. PRICE: £760



train, cuddles, 2024. Oil paint and oil pastel on wood board, wood frame, 25.5 x 31 cm. PRICE: £600



tomorrow, 2024. Oil paint and oil pastel on wood board, 37 x 40.5 cm. PRICE: £750



2 legged, 2024. Oil paint and oil pastel on wood board, wood frame, 22 x 32 cm. PRICE: £460

LUCILE HAEFFLINGER



Butterfly, 2022. Ink on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm.
PRICE: £100



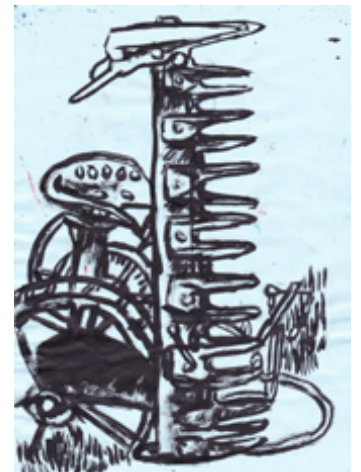
Butterfly left, 2023. Ink on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm.
PRICE: £100



Confused, love you, 2023. Ink on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm.
PRICE: £100



cut, 2023. Ink on paper, 21 x 29.7 cm. PRICE: £100



free cut, 2023. Ink on paper - 21 x 29.7 cm. PRICE: £100

OLHA PRYYMAK

OLHA PRYYMAK (b. 1979, Ukraine) is driven by curiosity in plant-human relationships, using oil paint as a tool to think through them. Painting allows for paying undivided attention to what is deemed important: the emotional flavour of lived experiences with the plants, on the way that the plants make you feel, savouring each brushstroke as a point of meditation on this interdependent relationship. These experiences usually stem from the performative side of Olha's practice – staged encounters with plants in the form of participatory tea sessions – part Ukrainian peasant healer seance, part tea ceremony, rooted in her heritage of Ukrainian folk herbalism.



At Land, 2023.
Oil on linen, 40x50 cm.
PRICE: £600



Why did she even help him (oats), 2023.
Oil on linen, 40x50 cm.
PRICE: £550

ABIGAIL HAMPSEY

ABIGAIL HAMPSEY (b. 1996, Lancaster, UK) is a landscape painter, maker, storyteller, and imaginer. Born in and now once again living in the landscape of her youth. Abigail draws on her memories and sense of place as well as her current lived experience to create representational images of the rural fields and world around her, as well as imagined, magical and psychogeographical landscapes. Abigail's practice is laced with an underlying sadness and feeling of loss. Loss for the natural world, loss of our "wild" spaces and loss of our ability to interact freely with and in nature. As well as painting, these feelings of loss have made their way into Abigail's work in the form of sculpture, craft, and poetry. Learning old practices and crafts as well as discovering dying words, deeply rooted to the land and its people. This practice first took its sculptural form in 2020 with the piece "our daily bread". A True to life dry stone wall constructed completely of bread made by the artist. The work aims to reflect upon the time spent daily, labouring over an artwork as well as nourishing oneself and others. The bread or stone therefore not just being the material of choice but also the income for the artist or maker. Abigail aims for her practice to be one of low cost. Low cost in terms materials and low cost in terms of the impact it or the materials have on the environment.



*Batemens Wood in Late November
(The 100 Achre wood), 2023.*
Oil on canvas, 74 x 82cm.
PRICE: £2400



Here Guides Home, Cairn #2, 2023.
Various breads and woven seat covers.
POA



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HYNEK MARTINEC

HYNEK MARTINEC (b.1980, Czech Republic) Hynek received the prestigious BP Young Artist Award (2007) for his hyper realistic portraits. His paintings are inspired by Old Masters and photographs, which link the past with the future, using modern technologies. He has gained recognition for his dark, haunting imagery that comments on life and death, and engages with historical artistic trends. The painter frequently borrows elements from the Old Masters and situates them in a present-day context. References are also made to literary-philosophical texts and spiritual subjects explored.



Sigrun's Bread II, 2023.
Oil on canvas, 80 x 100 cm.
PRICE: £12,000

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MIROSLAV POMICHAL

MIROSLAV POMICHAL (b.1984, Slovakia) lives and works in London and Sherborne, Dorset, where he teaches art history. Miroslov's work is distinguished by a sculptural treatment of the picture plane. His paintings depict emblematic symbols, landscape, urban vignettes, and scenes of conflict in which black lines crisscross the surface of each picture, allowing a sense of disruptive narrative. Abstraction is interspersed with the use of myopic symbolism, a trope of Expressionist painting concerned with the issues and tragedies of modern life, and particularly the tragedies of war. The monumentally concrete armature of the legacy of Expressionism is punctuated dramatically by a sense of dramatic storytelling and a commitment to the spiritual side of humankind as well.



Peasants' Revolt 1, 2023.
Oil on panel, 100 x 70 cm.
PRICE: £ 3,000



Field of Wheat, 2016.
Oil on panel, 24 x 30 cm.
PRICE: £750

JOHN STARK

JOHN STARK's (b.1979) dystopic, post-apocalyptic paintings reference the past to try and understand the future. In this, they are deeply influenced by the history of Western art: the Germanic Gothic, the dark existence before the advent of Reason, the haunting superstitions of the medieval mind which bubbled up in the visions of artists such as Salvator Rosa in his witch paintings or the neo-classical bacchanales of Poussin. On the other hand there is also contemporary kitsch and fantasy painting, suggesting how the pre-modern mentality is so lost to us that it now that it constitutes an 'Other'. Stark's paintings travel all these roads at once to explore how the mythical mindset still continues to reassert itself.



Reap the Harvest of the Day, 2024.
Oil on wood, 59 x 75 cm (framed).
PRICE: £7,500



Reap the Harvest, 2021.
Oil on wood, 50 x 40 cm,
PRICE: £6,000



Morning Roll with Mice, 2023.
Oil on copper, 21 x 26 cm, framed.
PRICE: £3,000