

## Last meal of a convicted killer

By Serene Ong, channelnewsasia.com | Posted: 03 January 2010 0837 hrs

SINGAPORE: Ted Bundy, a notorious American serial killer who bludgeoned, strangled and raped an estimated number of 35 victims in the 1970s, was executed on January 24, 1989. But before he was strapped to an electric chair at Florida State Prison, the 42-year-old placed an order for a set meal of steak, eggs, hash brown and coffee.

A disconcerting and somewhat macabre detail? You decide. A mugshot of Bundy, along with his selected grub – first in a series of photographic prints by American artist Jonathon Kambouris – will be displayed at the Esplanade Tunnel from January 7 to 24 as part of the M1 Singapore Fringe Festival 2010.

Aptly titled "Last Meals", the series is making its world premiere here under the festival's theme of Art and the Law. Kambouris, who is based in Brooklyn, New York, described the circumstances surrounding the inception of the project about convicted felons and their choice of meals before execution.

"It all started on June 12, 2001. This was the day after Timothy McVeigh was executed. I was reading an article in the Detroit Free Press about the execution and they described his final moments and his last meal. Immediately, a cold chill coursed through my body and at that point I started researching last meals of other convicted killers," he recalled.

"I was amazed that such information was made available. A few months later, I moved to New York City and ended up living three blocks from the World Trade Centre. One week later, 9/11 happened. There was some internal reaction that happened and inspired me in some way to go forward with the fascination I had with last meals."

Incidentally, McVeigh – who was convicted of bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, killing 168 people, including 19 children in a day care centre on the ground floor of the building – had asked for two pints of mint chocolate chip ice cream before his execution by lethal injection.

Self-professed to be drawn to dark grittiness, Kambouris said: "Whatever may be clear or unclear about these convicted killers being guilty, this choice for their last meal is without doubt, honest and true. There is some powerful connection between the face and the last meal. If it were just the meal by itself, something would be missing. The viewer would not get a real visual and factual depiction of what I was trying to convey with this project."

Even though the artist himself has not gotten into trouble with the law for taking liberty in the area of copyright matters with the downloading of mugshots from the Internet, some may find him guilty of infringing the sensibilities of those who have been victimised in one way or the other – 'charges of offence' which the 27-year-old seems quite ready to face.

"Most people have responded with a lot of interest in this series, which is very encouraging. It is great to see that viewers find this project as interesting and fascinating as I do. The best response I receive is from people I do not know who contact me to let me know how interesting and thought-provoking Last Meals is.

"My family and friends are always very supportive so you expect that they will always give you positive feedback. However, when someone who has no connection to you contacts you with positive feedback, it is a really great feeling. I have not received any disheartening feedback yet, but I have prepared myself for it – if and when it comes," Kambouris said, adding that he is honoured and excited to be having his first international show in the city-state.

"I knew very little about Singapore before I was selected for the show. I have always wanted to travel to the Far East but have never had the chance... I read that Singapore has the best street food in the world! I am looking forward to the different mix and influences of the culturally diverse food in Singapore.

"I was also informed about how people in Singapore take their coffee 'very seriously'. As a coffee lover myself, I am very excited to drink some delicious brews," he exclaimed.

Still on the topic of food, the photographer went on to reveal that his next project involves capturing painting-like, still-life shots of fruits and vegetables in their process of decay. Yes, gritty indeed.



Photos

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Ted Bundy from Jonathon Kambouris' 'Last Meals'

### Video



[PTM interview with Jonathon Kambouris](#)