

MEGAN FIZELL

Independent curator and arts writer, Sydney

"Elizabeth Willing's multidisciplinary practice encourages audience participation and is part of an established lineage of 20th-century artists using edible materials. Her dining performances recall the experimental and multisensory banquets of the Futurists, combined with Rirkrit Tiravanija's relational eating encounters, constructed situations in which interaction and social exchanges take place. In these performances, Willing expands this avenue of inquiry by manipulating familiar dining conventions to disrupt expected norms and behaviours associated with food consumption. She achieves this by designing custom utensils: a double-ended straw you share with a neighbour, a tipping plate that tilts away from the most glutinous, and a round vessel with ceramic lips you carefully kiss in order to drink. Willing's meals probe some of the uncomfortable aspects of collective dining and the intimacy of eating.

Her wall-mounted confectionary installations utilise aesthetic forms of minimalist sculpture to frame the abundant materials, a tactic also employed by Felix González-Torres in his stack-and-spill artworks of the 1990s. While the candy in González-Torres's spills is replenished at the close of each day, Willing's installations display the opened wrappers and half-consumed biscuits as an evolving map of eating patterns and interactions. Her practice reveals an ongoing interest in not only what we collectively eat, but how we eat it.

Willing's art identifies a shift away from privileging vision as the primary method to encounter artwork towards more multifaceted experiences drawing on the entire sensory register. Through installations and experimental dining encounters, she invites participants to touch and taste her work, collapsing the distance between artwork and audience."

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JAN MINCHIN

Director, Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Elizabeth Willing first came to Jan Minchin's attention in 2016, Minchin's curiosity piqued by Willing's experimental dinner at GOMA in collaboration with chef Josue Lopez. "At around the same time, she made works using chocolate, peanut butter and cheese," says the gallerist. "Inventive, ambitious, even dangerous, they were totally engaging and became even more so when I discovered how conceptually tough they are, grounded in a deep knowledge of art, culture and design. As New England Regional Art Museum curator Rachel Parsons said: 'Willing is not only an artist, but a cook, designer, engineer and scientist, testing and manipulating the material qualities and limitations of food and applying her highly refined sensibility'."

Tolarno Galleries has been working with Willing since late 2016 and presented her *Guava Season* as a Backroom project in April 2017. Minchin also included her work *Pink Poles* in @50, the 2017 exhibition celebrating Tolarno Galleries' 50th anniversary. Created from purchased icy-pole strips, "*Pink Poles* is an innovative, minimalist work evoking childhood memories, as well as being a witty reference to Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles*, purchased by National Gallery of Australia in 1973", says Minchin.

Minchin is particularly excited to be showing Willing's project, *Strawberry Thief*, at the Melbourne Art Fair. "It's a new chapter at MAF," she says. "The energy and enthusiasm is palpable. We felt that Tolarno should match MAF's vigour with a bright new talent. Elizabeth's performances are completely engaging and she'll work in tandem with Melbourne mixologist, Cennon Hanson. *Strawberry Thief* will be a feast for the senses. We think she'll be the hit of the fair!"

Strawberry Thief prices range from \$200 to \$5,000 for individual works to \$40,000 for the entire project, in keeping with her previous sales, according to Minchin. Considering the kinds of collectors who might be interested in Willing's work, Minchin thinks that "collectors who fell in love with her 2017 *Saltwater Freshwater* ceramics will be keen to acquire the new *Pacify* glasses, while those new to her fruitcake collages and shortbread sculptures will be captivated. Who doesn't know that art, food and wine is the perfect mix?" ■