

ARTBEAT

CVPA's 'Mouthfeel' exhibit gives viewers a lot to chew on



Don Wilkinson

When you put something in your mouth, whether you like it or not is determined, of course, by your sense of taste, and the fondness or displeasure with the five categories of that sense: salty, sweet, sour, bitter and savory (also called umami.)

The sense of smell also plays a major role, as the aroma of sautéing onions, the stench of limburger cheese, or the smoke rising from grilling burgers may whet the appetite, or destroy it.

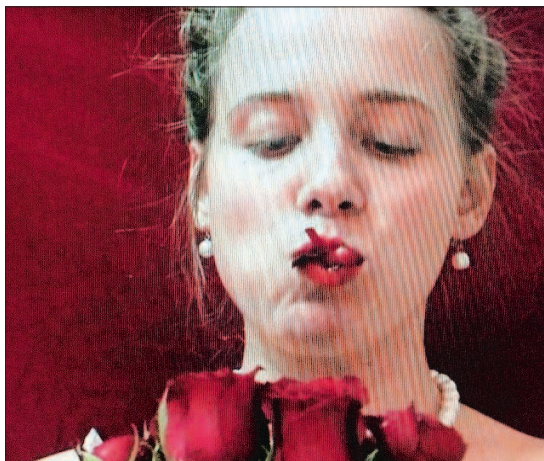
Another important factor is mouthfeel, the actual physical sensation of food or drink (or anything else) in the mouth, distinct from taste and smell.

Also known as texture, it includes qualities such as dryness (stale bread), graininess (salted pretzels), sliminess (okra) as well as viscosity, roughness, smoothness and density.

In an exhibition in the CVPA Campus Gallery, five video artists attempt to "stimulate a synaesthetic response in the viewer through observation..."

"Mouthfeel" is curated by Australian art historian Megan Fizell. It has exhibited previously in art venues in Sydney, Brisbane and Darwin, all in Australia.

Five short videos play simultaneously and each

**"Rose Garden" by Hannah Raisin** [IMAGE FROM VIDEO]

"I will take the sun into my mouth and leap into the ripe air."

Bjork

monitor is equipped with earphones. The videos feature people, primarily women, ingesting food products or seemingly inedible substances.

"Coffee & Milk," by Hillerbrand+Magsamen, a Michigan-based husband and wife collaborative team, is the most abstract of the lot. In what at first seems to be a moving meteorological map or something beneath the lens of a microscope, brown and white liquids flow, intersperse and merge.

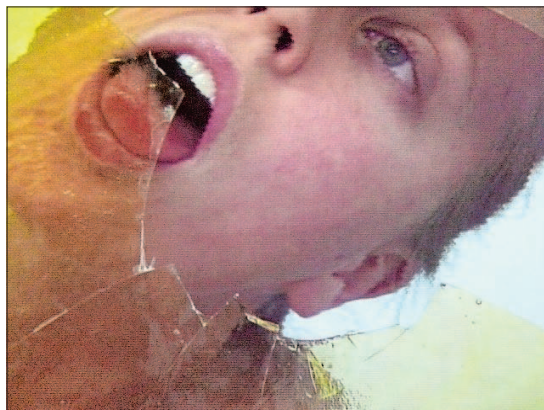
A man blows milk into coffee, the woman blows coffee into milk. Manipulating the fluids with hair and lips, it becomes a metaphor

for intimacy. And the viewer becomes voyeur.

Nina Ross's self-portrait video art performance work "The Foreignness of Language" features the young artist eating what appear to be small scraps of paper, after she pronounces a word in Norwegian.

Ross has noted that learning a new language is about adjusting to knowing or not knowing oneself in a foreign language (or culture.) The ingesting of the words she has pronounced is loaded with the symbolism of assimilation.

Polish-born artist Martynka Wawrzyniak presents a video that quickly evolves from mildly erotic to straight out disturbing. In "Chocolate," Wawrzyniak is in recline and videoed from above. A drip of brown liquid becomes a drizzle which becomes a steady

**"Lick" by Elizabeth Willing** [IMAGE FROM VIDEO]

stream which becomes an unrelenting deluge.

Her face, hair, neck and shoulders are engulfed and submerged with chocolate sauce, administered with all the affection a waterboarding interrogator. She gasps under the sauce, as black and thick as motor oil. In her video, chocolate is not an aphrodisiac ... it's a weapon.

Like Wawrzyniak, artist Hannah Raisin negates a romantic symbol by, in her case, devouring a dozen red roses. A young woman is wearing a pearl necklace and earrings, and the shoulder straps of a white dress are clearly visible. And then she begins to eat the flowers.

At first, it is with something akin to enthusiasm. And then it is with a bit of reluctance. She seems to grow nauseated but maintains an "I can DO THIS!" attitude. Taking a whole rose head into her mouth, she gags. It works as a discomfiting commentary on romance

and a certain sexual act.

The last (and longest video at 17 minutes) is "Lick" by Elizabeth Willing. In it, a woman licks what looks like a translucent yellow glass pane. But it turns out to be made of cast sugar. She is relentless.

She continues licking until it begins to thin and dissolve. The pane becomes sharp angled shards that she bites off until all is gone. It is sweeter than anything performance artist Chris Burden ever did ... but it still looks painful.

You may need to brush your teeth after this one.

"Mouthfeel" is on display at the CVPA Campus Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, 285 Old Westport Road, North Dartmouth until March 9.

Don Wilkinson is a painter and art critic who lives in New Bedford. Contact him at Don.Wilkinson@gmail.com. His reviews run each week in Coastin'.

FEBRUARY VACATION WEEK

Storyteller Len Cabral – Feb 19 | 11 am ★ Hands-on family fun – Feb 19 – 23

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