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BLOGS

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Frieze New York: Let Them Eat Cake

BY: LISA DENNISON | May 14, 2012 3:47 PM



Will Cotton's plaster cakes at Mary Boone Gallery.

NEW YORK - The inaugural [Frieze Art Fair in New York](#) was a feeding frenzy, in more ways than one. Not only did the art appear to be selling like hotcakes, but also the organizers cleverly brought pop-up restaurants from all of the art world's favorite hangouts. You could dine indoors or outside on the waterfront, and enjoy some spectacular views of Manhattan from Randall's Island. I spent a lot of time ducking in and out of the Deutsche Bank lounge, where there were all sorts of foods appropriate to the time of day, from veggie and beef sliders, to a sophisticated cheese plate. In the mix was a great presentation of work from the bank's collection, featuring artists whose work incorporated musical sound, including John Cage, Hanne Darboven, and Christian Marclay. Throughout the fair were tempting food options, including [Sant Ambroeus Café](#), [The Fat Radish](#), and outside, Roberta's pizza from Bushwick, Brooklyn, where I hear it is impossible to score a table.

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Art dealer Gavin Brown and actor Mark Ruffalo cook sausages at Frieze. Food was a leitmotif of some of the art as well. There's always something interesting cooking at Gavin Brown's *Enterprise*, and this time was no exception. Artist **Rikrit Tiravanija** had on display a large meat rack hung with metal sausages. And lo and behold, just as my afternoon hunger pangs started, there was Gavin and actor Mark Ruffalo, (who, by the way, looks like Gavin's doppelganger) cooking real sausages on hot plates for the crowd, to bring attention to *Water Defense*, his anti-hydrofracking campaign.

The food theme continued as I attended a few openings on Thursday night. Rachel Lee Hovnanian's exhibition *Mud Pie* at Leila Heller's Chelsea gallery is a remarkable exploration of the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the artist's Texas childhood. Her art navigates the real and make believe, exploring themes of beauty, narcissism, and memory. At the gallery entry is a café with stools, a countertop, and waitresses serving tacos, barbecue pork, bacon, and pie. The food is made by the artist, in conjunction with a food scientist to taste like their Tex-Mex namesakes, but they are gummy and artificial. I had the pleasure of meeting Rachel's mother, who is supposedly quite the chef, and who made the pecan pie squares for the after party. They were just about the best rendition I ever tasted.



The Rachel Lee Hovnanian exhibition at Leila Heller Gallery.

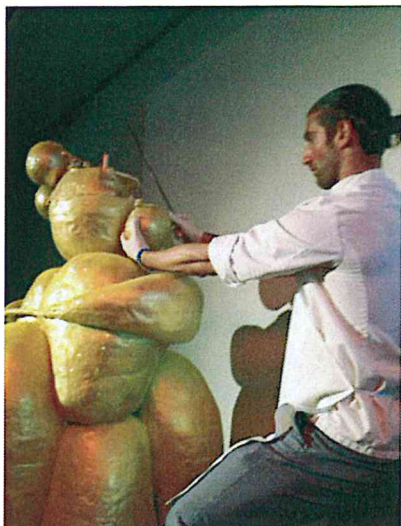
Next I stopped at Will Cotton's new show at Mary Boone to see his candy landscapes. I loved the painting "Crown" featuring Katy Perry standing in front of the most gorgeous pastel cakes, and an ambitious installation of sculpture modeled from cakes that Cotton baked, decorated, and then cast in plaster. It made me think of many an opulent wedding cake that seemed more a decadent display than something to be eaten.

And speaking of cakes, at a blowout celebration of a collector's fiftieth birthday at Jeff Koons' studio, there was an astonishing cake in the shape of the *Venus of Willendorf*, a classical antiquity that has obsessed the artist for years. The cake was apparently made in Baltimore by one of the stars of the Food Network's *Ace of Cakes*. Watching the carver hack the gilded confection into pieces was a performance in and of itself. Because different sections were made of different flavors, I had to have three

pieces before I forced myself to stop.

(left) The Venus of Willendorf cake at Jeff Koons' studio.

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