

Claudia Hart: A FEAST OF UNEARTHLY DELIGHTS



Claudia Hart, *More Food for Children*, 2011



Claudia Hart, *Elixir*, 2011



Claudia Hart, *RGB*, 2011



Claudia Hart, "Recumulations," installation view, 2011, Black & White Gallery, New York, photo by Kurt Hentschlager

The New York artist Claudia Hart, who teaches digital art at the Art Institute of Chicago, has made a brilliant discovery. The synthetic foods that are otherworldly commonplaces in the American diet, things like Cheetos, Maraschino cherries and Jello, have a phosphorescent kinship with the digital MacIntosh apple, a kind of cybernetic ur-fruit found across all manner of virtual platforms.

Though the artist posits this menu as "the death of food," I can't help seeing it as a 21st-century parable of a new Eden, with the digital Eve's apple and the culinary Great Satan. The palette is in the palate.

This new culinary order – and we are what we eat – was presented in a series of eerie color photographs in Hart's show last month at Bitforms in Chelsea, "When a Rose Is Not a Rose."

Hart's new Eve made an appearance in a parallel show at Black and White Gallery in Williamsburg, via a six-channel video installation titled *Recumulations*. A series of 3D digital avatars, uncolored, naked and rudimentary – and ostensibly transgendered and multiracial – move across an Imaginary space in an "experimental dance" inspired by a 1971 conceptual movement piece of Trisha Brown that was reperformed by Roberto Sifuentes, a founding member of La Pocha Nostra, a performance group.

In our cultural narrative, future-tech typically begins with promise and ends with dystopia. Hart's 15-foot tall cyborgs, dancing erratically across the gallery walls, could well be the dyads of a new *Metamorphoses*.

The final act of Hart's New York City trifecta was the banquet produced by bitforms at Third Streaming Space in Soho, where chefs Richard Noel and Ronald Jean-Gilles presented a "molecular feast" titled *Real Fake* (in lieu of a post-opening dinner). The meal consisted of a series of "molecularly altered" dishes – elegant, delicious, barely real – Cheetos-flavored carbonated ice-cream, lavender smoke and grapes reconstituted with dry ice. It's food for the postmodern cyborg, and that cyborg is us.

"Claudia Hart: When a Rose is Not a Rose," Oct. 25-Dec. 3, 2011, Bitforms Gallery, 529 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011

"Recumulations," Oct. 28-Nov. 27, 2011, Black and White Gallery, 483 Driggs Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211.

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Claudia Hart's molecular-performance-feast, "The Real Fake," at bitforms, New York, November 2011



Chefs Richard Noel and Ronald Jean-Gilles prepare some molecular gastronomy for Claudia Hart's molecular-performance-feast, "The Real Fake," at bitforms, New York, November 2011