

Smelling and Tasting are Believing:
A Studio Inquiry into an Intersensorial Practice

Nancy Long

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Art Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

March 2007

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34707-2
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-34707-2

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ABSTRACT

Smelling and Tasting are Believing: A Studio Inquiry into an Intersensorial Practice

Nancy Long

In this thesis I sought to explore an intersensorial connection with my studio and art teaching practice through a studio-based inquiry by asking *how can I utilize the senses of taste and smell in my studio practice in the visual arts?* The question was first explored by focusing on certain physiological and psychological functions of our gustatory and olfactory senses and their link to memory and secondly by looking to literature within cultural studies, philosophies of art and art practices. This literature suggests that there is a growing acknowledgement of an intersensory way of knowing, yet its potential in the art classroom is still largely untapped.

I chose to answer my question through a heuristic methodology by drawing from the research findings, personal observations, dialogues and experiences on taste and smell, memory and perception. The methodology was used to answer my question through a creative synthesis in four installations linking the two senses and memory and perception. Although I deem the installations as personally successful, I discovered that my personal aesthetic is largely based on pattern and order, which could both hinder and help in my teaching of an intersensorial practice. Teaching toward sensory awareness in a literate, visually oriented society may need to begin with a corporeal re-connection with and *recognition* of our environment. Through the recognition of the “aesthetics of the everyday” such suggestions and implications for the art classroom are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their meaningful involvement in my life and/or in my work during the completion of this studio thesis. Many thanks go to my thesis advisor, and fellow foodie, Dr. Lorrie Blair, for providing the critical eye, enthusiasm, and humour that kept me working steadily towards the end goal. A loving thank you goes to my dear husband Mark, for continually sustaining me, even in my frequent absence, with love and really good food. I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Richard Lachapelle and Dr. Rhona Richman Kenneally for their keen insights. I would also like to express my gratitude to the friends I made in Art Education and all friends and family who supported and were enthused by my endeavors, most notably my mother and father. Maman, merci pour ta fierté, pour toujours m'avoir faire croire que je peux accomplir n'importe quoi (and for never making those cakes!). A very special thank you and deepest gratitude goes to my father (Dad), for all of his help, craftsmanship and dedication to the execution of my ideas. Mille fois merci pour ta générosité, ton support moral et tes talents acquis pendant "tes années *granola*".

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1. CONFECTION CONFESSIONS: Introduction

Rationale

I have noticed that I often appreciate, understand and remember more clearly works of art that require me to somehow participate, either kinaesthetically or by having my senses beyond that of sight acknowledged. Bill Viola's (1982) *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House*, Gary Hill's (1992) *Tall Ships* and most recently, the Canadian Center for Architecture's (CCA) exhibition *Sense of the City* (2006) immediately come to mind. Each of these works depended heavily on the viewers' physical interaction in order to fully experience the piece. Viola's had me sit in a chair facing a television monitor that displayed a still silhouette mirroring my seated pose, while I listened to obscure whispers through headphones. After a while I forgot I was watching a video and started to notice this *was* my silhouette since the image had not moved, when suddenly the video showed a figure behind 'me'/the silhouette about to hit 'me' over the head. As the figure approached I remember feeling slightly panicked and I almost jumped out of my skin upon the simulated impact of the hit. Hill's installation had me engaging with projected spectral figures only when I stepped on hidden sensors in the floor. The figures first emerged as white blurred shapes in the distance, but became slowly recognizable as figures as they approached me. I recall feeling tense and slightly uneasy as their blurred white images took shape as they got closer and closer. I felt anxious about their encroaching of my personal space in the pitch black room, even though I knew full well the figures were completely simulated. The CCA's exhibition revealed and simulated the prevalent sights, sounds, scents and textures existing in cities that we encounter on a daily basis. For example, the scent installation exposed long glass beakers filled with such

essences as garbage, grass and the city after a rain. In these three instances, I experienced the work through my sense of sight, yet I believe it was important that my body was made to somehow engage and connect with these works. It is, for me, the corporeal connection that I feel that makes me recall these pieces so vividly.¹ Some years ago, this led me to begin exploring participatory practices in my own artwork, but I never considered my own motivations or struggles. As I become increasingly interested in having my students attempt to produce this kind of work, I realise that I am not fully equipped to help them face the challenge of addressing their other senses in art making. I have to start considering how I address some of mine.

I consider that I experience and reflect on much of life through my sense of taste. I wake up enthusiastic about what I will eat for dinner and excited that I am minutes away from my morning coffee from my corner barista. My vacation pictures are not simply of San Francisco's cable cars and France's castles, but of the giant burrito I ate in Haight Ashbury and the sparkling violet cocktail that marked my lazy afternoon in Provence. Just now, as I write, I am snacking on pretzels and the mustard from a jar I bought on my vacation. I put the mustard-tipped pretzel in my mouth and the sticky, hot day I spent two summers ago summer in the Napa Valley is on my tongue. Whenever I come near the aroma of violets, I am transported to that little restaurant in Nîme, with the tiny tapestries of minstrels and damsels on the wall and the friendly waiter is talking to me about his wife, the chef. This sensory memory connection I have with food was only recently revealed to me when I came across a lengthy journal I kept during a European

¹ That two of the three examples appeal to a virtual aspect of an experience will be dealt with later in my discussion.

vacation I took over ten years ago. At first I simply noticed that I had many food entries. Then it became clear that the countless descriptive entries about my meals, snacks and drinks elaborated how I connected my memories of the people and places I encountered during my trip—and as I lived my life—to what I tasted and smelled. Particularly vivid, considering they are so distant, seem to be memories of my childhood when I am sucking on a piece of candy or when the air is permeated with the sweet smell of baked goods. Reading Proust's (2003, 1922) novel, *À la recherche du temps perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)*, seemed to legitimize this curious relationship with distant olfactory and gustatory experiences. The main character has similar experiences tasting, after so many years, a *Madeleine*, the small, lemony sponge cake his aunt used to serve him as a boy. Further investigation about the connection of food and memory revealed that not only is our sense of smell perhaps vital in fostering our recall, but also confirmed that our sense of taste and the true *flavour* of things cannot exist without olfaction at play. (Prescott, 2003). The phenomenon that a long forgotten moment in time can stem from the slightest whiff of a scent or from the taste of a morsel of food might question our reliance on our sense of sight as the ultimate mode of perceptual understanding. The dominant positions of visual culture in our society and of the senses of sight and sound in the arts make it difficult for the viewer to receive or pay attention to art that relies on the senses of taste and smell. If, however, the viewer is put into a participatory or even 'activation' role the acknowledgement of the other senses may be more easily recognised.

In this thesis I sought to explore an intersensorial connection with my studio and art teaching practice through a studio-based inquiry by asking *how can I utilize the senses*

of taste and smell in my studio practice in the visual arts? The question was first explored by focusing on certain physiological and psychological functions of our gustatory and olfactory senses and their link to memory and secondly by looking to literature within cultural studies, philosophies of art and art practices. This literature suggests that there is a growing acknowledgement of an intersensory way of knowing, yet its potential in the art classroom is still largely untapped.

By undertaking the challenge of exploring ideas related to sensory perception of taste and smell in my own studio practice, I was able to gain firsthand experience on my struggles and successes with the topic. This understanding will surely prove useful when I am ready to pass on the challenge to my students. The combination of my fondness of food beyond the simple necessity of life, food's memory inducing potential, my interest in participatory art and my need to be adequately prepared to teach a challenging unit has guided my desire to explore gustatory and olfactory modes of perception as they relate to art, art making and art education.

Research focus

In *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Howes, 2005), several authors are brought together to contribute to a growing recognition that we do not understand our world only through what we see, but rather through what we sense, and the senses are themselves sources of knowledge that have been traditionally subordinated by sight.

Sensory experiences can be especially put into question when it comes to art, since we are rarely asked to rely on senses other than sight and sound when contemplating art forms. Within my own studio practice I have been increasingly interested in trying to reconcile the visual with other modes of perception such as sound and touch. It becomes all the more challenging to break with boundaries of what constitutes 'aesthetics' when tradition dictates that they cannot be achieved through foods and odours (Korsmeyer, 1999, 2005), and thereby making it difficult to perceive art when one's senses of taste and smell are called upon. This might explain the shortage of work engaging these senses in the past.

As the starting point and subject of my artwork, I consider the sensory capacities of memory and food. Of particular interest are sweets and candy for their seemingly innate potential for early autobiographical recall, and for their rather deliberate sensual appeal. Using a heuristic methodology of inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), which aims at exploring a direct personal connection and relationship with the research topic, I was able to synthesize all that I gathered during my inquiry in the form of research notes, personal observations and dialogues, journal entries, photographs and sketches into four installations that answer my research question. Thus what fuelled the inquiry was the task of re-presenting ideas on taste and smell and their relationship with memory through a medium that relies heavily on visual perception. The research question emerged as *how can I utilize the senses of taste and smell within my studio practice in the visual arts?*

I gathered data, in the form of observation notes and journal entries during the planning and completion process of the installations and analyzed looking at three elements. First I sought further evidence of instances of a sensorial understanding of our world as proposed by Howes and other defendants of taste and smell as meaningful components of our knowledge. Secondly, I looked for indication of how the whole inquiry led to an understanding and new knowledge through the studio process. Finally, in light of both my personal studio practice and my teaching practice, I identified evidence of obstacles and successes in trying to transfer such theories into practice.

The result of this inquiry can add to the emerging focus on the senses as legitimate and alternative modes of awareness and perception and places me in a better position to understand and to further my studio practice using an intersensorial paradigm of perception. This in turn can be conjoined to my teaching practice and validated through its educative potential in art education in general. At the core of this studio-based thesis is the exploration of our gustatory and olfactory senses as capable of eliciting memories while engaging our understanding through a multisensory experience of perception. As such, taste and smell can become valid perceptual paradigms—separate from the sight-minded traditions of the West—in artistic and educational contexts.

2. FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Review of Literature

The Sensual Revolution

If we went about our lives not paying attention to that which we perceive through an *embodied* connection with our environment, such as the kinaesthetic feeling of standing on a moving bus that's coming to a stop, or the olfactory perception that the expiration date on the milk should have been a day earlier, we could foreseeably cause ourselves harm. That which we understand—our cognition—is not, contrary to widespread belief, formulated in our minds by a system of signs akin to the way a computer receives and processes data (Varela et al, 1991). The information we perceive is processed through both our bodies and our minds simultaneously, therefore cognition becomes an *embodied action*. The authors continue, “cognition depends upon the kinds of experience from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities and that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context” (p. 173). It is this idea of experiencing the world through a mind/body connection that puts into question the way we have been trained to learn to read and perceive our world primarily through a system of signs. A world that, as pointed out by Marshall McLuhan (1961), has made our sense of sight lord over our senses since the introduction of the printed word.

Cultural anthropologist David Howes' (2005) multidisciplinary volume of essays dealing with a growing body of knowledge he dubs “the sensual revolution”, is inspired by a re-ordering of the senses currently dominated by sight (p.). Howes proposes

intersensoriality, which he defines as a “multi-directional interaction of the senses and of sense ideologies, whether considered in relation to a society, an individual, or a work” (p.9). An embodied cognition is reflected in Howes’ text in the term *emplacement*. *Emplacement* encompasses the idea of the mind, body and environment interacting in a sensuous relationship, which highlights the undercurrent of the tome, as a new perceptive paradigm allowing us to “reposition ourselves in a relationship to a sensuous materiality of the world”(p. 7).² Hence, as Howes continues, the feeling of displacement is being in an unconnected social and physical state in relation to one’s environment.

Concerning all of the senses, this connection to the “sensuous materiality of the world” is culturally implicit in many non-western cultures (Howes, 2005, p. 7). Dorrine Kondo (1983) explains that during the ritualized tea ceremony, the Japanese rely on their senses, shifting the focus from one sensory mode to another, in total silence in order to achieve a heightened state of perception.

Classen (1993) considers, among other cultures, the Ongee of Little Andaman Island (in the Bay of Bengal) whose governing sense is that of smell. From referring to themselves by pointing to their nose, to believing that a person’s bones are made of an odour mass, the Ongee’s way of life centers around how and what they perceive through olfaction. When they paint parts of their bodies with clay, they are sending their ancestors specific scented messages. Depending on the pattern created by the combination of painted and unpainted, different odour patterns are released from the

² Howes cautions that while ‘sensuous materiality’ is often misconstrued as having to do with sexual desire, this association is typically a Western one rather than exemplifying “an interaction with the social and

body. This communicative process is called *to remember* from the Ongee word *minyelange* (Pandya cited in Classen, 1993).

These are but two examples of cultures acknowledging the body's role in cognitive formulations³. Howes assures us that these essays are not compiled for the purposes of completely disregarding our sight-minded western culture and concedes that a sensual revolution won't take "us outside symbols systems of culture" (p. 4).

Here in the West, it is no great revelation that the sense of sight dominates our modes of perception. Concerning gustatory and olfactory experiences, a 'reading' seems only natural through a physical *embodied* experience. Philosophers have been expounding for centuries that taste and smell cannot be intellectualised due to their subjective nature as 'pleasure' senses (Korsmeyer, 1999)⁴. That is, they are sensed through internal, immediate physical contact with the body and as such are categorised as 'lower senses' and cannot exist within the realm of sight, sound and touch, the 'higher' senses—those of objective perception. It does not help that we are limited in our language when trying to describe scents and flavours. Sight, sound and touch apparently "contribute...more to cognition of the exterior object, than they arouse the consciousness of the affected organ" [ie: the tongue and olfactory bulbs within the nose] (Kant, 1798, in Korsmeyer, p. 210). Though scent and taste have been deemed less important to cognition throughout philosophy, Kant acknowledges their usefulness in warning us

material world" (Howes 2005, p. 6)

³ For further discussion on non-western embodied practices see Howes (2005) chapters 9, 10, 12, 13.

⁴ In *Making Sense of Taste*, Korsmeyer write at length about the history in philosophical circles of relegating the sense of sight as a 'superior' sense.

against toxins. (Kant, 1798, in Korsmeyer, p. 211) Like animals, we do rely on taste and smell to determine the safety of our environment (e.g. sniffing food for ‘freshness’), though the human correlation with taste and toxins is not nearly as refined. (Gibbons, 1986; Gibson, 1966).

What we have considered thus far from a humanities perspective—that intersensoriality should be acknowledged in the way we perceive the world—is paralleled in the scientific community. It would seem that an understanding of our perceptive processes has been, until recently, studied and analysed compartmentally; that is, each of the five senses in isolation from one another. Our senses work co-operatively in that “perception is fundamentally a multisensory phenomenon”, though we are rarely aware of it (Calvert et al, 2004, p. xi)⁵. This would suggest that even the ‘almighty’ sight, in any situation, does not act alone. In relation to our gustatory and olfactory perceptual systems, perhaps no two other senses are so *intersensorially* connected. What we perceive as taste is in fact the odiferous particles released by chewing, friction and saliva that move the odorants to the back of our mouths, past the palette into the same olfactory receptors affected when we sniff something. The four taste categories (sweet, sour, bitter

⁵ I do acknowledge that this inquiry may, to a certain extent, perpetuate such a division by isolating my focus to taste and smell. My interest in food’s potential for memory recall is the reason for my isolation of taste and smell from the three other senses. Nevertheless, food is perhaps the most difficult external ‘object’ onto which we *can* isolate sensory systems of perceptions since all five senses often interact when we consume it. Let me elaborate by using a piece of hard candy as an example: I am attracted to its bright red colour, thinking it might be cherry flavoured; I taste its sweetness and detect a strawberry flavour through olfaction; I swirl it around on my tongue and feel its smooth surface, while I enjoy the sound of it rattling against my teeth; I suck on it for a while, enjoying the sweet liquid that my saliva creates as the candy coating is eroded away; I put it between my teeth and chomp down hard until I feel and hear the candy crunch and crack sending little shards of strawberry sugar flying on my tongue. As mentioned in the above text, if we are not paying strict attention, we are rarely aware of all of the processes at play. In *The Taste Culture Reader* (2005), Carolyn Korsmeyer refers to taste itself as intersensorial, in that it should be “shorthand for the experience of flavor in all its dimensions, including those supplied by other senses” (p.3).

and salt) apply to all foods until we ‘smell’ them in the back of our mouths and recognize them as flavours (Gibson, 1966; Prescott, 2003). Without olfaction, a grapefruit and a lemon will have the same basic taste sensation (sour), just as caramel and molasses would simply taste ‘sweet’⁶. As such it appears that we mistakenly identify flavour for taste, and taste for the intersensoriality of taste *and* smell.

Why we like or don’t enjoy certain flavours seems to be linked to our sensitivities to the four basic tastes we develop in infancy. Prescott writes that hedonic responses to the four basic tastes exist at birth and “highly similar patterns of likes and dislikes for pure tastes” can be found cross-culturally, regardless of diet (p. 252)⁷. Sweet sensitivity, for example, is proven as rewarding and motivational in foetuses at some point after twenty-six weeks, the time it takes for the taste system to fully develop (Scott, 2000). This helps dictate the early connection to feelings of reward and joy when we are faced with foods with the basic taste of sweet.

That we may recall early feelings of such joy in the presence of sweets is once again due to the intersensoriality of taste and smell. Our system receives scent information as smells pass through both retronasal (back of nose through mouth) and orthonasal (nose) passages. The smell is then transmitted to the brain by the olfactory bulbs, which extend directly from the brain to behind the bridge of the nose. Signals

⁶ This is easily demonstrated and, I might add, tortuously exemplified when experiencing a head cold and suffering congested or ‘blocked’ nasal passages. The result is a perceived inability to taste one’s food, but as noted, the problem is that we can’t smell anything.

⁷ Prescott also points out that we use the word ‘taste’ to interchangeably discuss aesthetic judgement and the act of tasting; and the words ‘bitter’, ‘sweet’, and ‘sour’ to describe our feelings towards people. He continues, “Our use of taste qualities to describe such positive and negative emotions or qualities unwittingly reflects the underlying structure of the taste experience itself” (p. 252).

from the olfactory bulbs are then transmitted directly to the limbic lobe—that part of the brain responsible for emotion and memory (Gibbons, 1986; Prescott, 2003).

Taste and Smell and Memory

Our olfactory and gustatory modes of perception extend beyond mere nourishment and pleasure, and their intersensoriality can help us to understand the role they play in cognition when considering their connection to emotions and memory. Our knowledge of scents seems to be so entrenched in our memory not only due to the physiological construction of our olfactory system (see previous chapter), but also for two psychological explanations.

An odor [sic] has a far greater chance of never being encountered again than a visual or auditory stimulus does. The specificity of odors as encoding cues may therefore enable them to elicit memories where no other cue can suffice. In addition, proactive interference is very strong in odor memory while retroactive interference is weak (Lawless and Engen, 1977) That is, the first association made to an odor is very hard to unlearn and subsequent associations to the same scent are difficult to form. Both the low probability of subsequent exposure and strong proactive interference may enable odors to reawaken memories for events in our past that we might never otherwise retrieve. (Herz, 2004, parag. 25)

Proust refers to this phenomenon in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, “taste and smell alone, . . . , remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection” (Proust, 2003,1922, parag. 11)

This food/smell as emotional memory triggers is further explored from the perspective of identity in the non-fictional writings in Sutton’s (2001) *Remembrance of*

Repasts and in Erdinc's (2001) *Journeys through Smell and Taste: Home, Self and Identity*. The authors explore some of the tastes and smells from their homeland and the emotional impact they can have on those who have relocated or have been displaced. Feelings such as extreme longing are temporarily quelled when eating a piece of home, be it Kalymnian food from Greece (Sutton) or smelling Turkish tea (Erdinc). Sutton (2001) links this phenomenon to "returning to the whole"⁸, in that when such foods are consumed the emigrant is reconnected to his natural environment, his home. Thus the migrant is sated and momentarily no longer feels a sense of displacement. Sutton adds that such 'returning to the whole' need not only apply to migrant people. Referring to Proust's childhood recollection as quoted above, Sutton claims that a similar experience of 'wholeness', "can be at work in temporal as in spatial or spatio-temporal displacement. And indeed Proust directs us once again to the power of sensory parts to return us to the whole, of the unsubstantial fragment to reveal the vast structure." (p. 84). In this context we can argue that if, as Howes notes, *displacement* ("the feeling that one is homeless, disconnected from one's physical and social environment" (Howes, 2005, p. 7) is the counterpart to *emplacement*, then the act of smelling and eating such foods from home also becomes an emplaced experience. Perhaps it is this type of emplacement—the 'proustian' kind—that manifests itself through foods and odours into 'nostalgia'.

The powerful relations existing between foods, emotion and memory are such that we may not need convincing from an academic point of view. The consumer market has caught on. Lupton (1996) points out that the memory/emotion connection with food is so

⁸ "Returning to the whole", as Sutton (2001) acknowledges, is a term appropriated from Fernandez (1982) (p. 75).

strong that “fragrances have been especially created to encapsulate our emotional responses to food tastes and smells” (p.33). Perfumes incorporating the scents of vanilla and cotton candy for example are said to evoke a connection to memories of childhood and simple pleasures (Lupton, 1996). This brings us back to the idea that ‘sweet’ was imprinted onto us very early on (Scott, 2000).

A parallel can also be made by considering the nostalgic potential evoked by sweets specifically. The fragrance company, Demeter Fragrance Library, has in the last few years bottled perfumes synthetically duplicating cotton candy, and vanilla, in the essence of ‘Vanilla Cake Batter’ along with ‘Marshmallow’, ‘Bubble Gum’, ‘Liquorice’, ‘Gingerbread’, ‘Brownie’ and ‘Chocolate Chip Cookies’ among others. Their entire line is based on the Proust phenomenon, as they state: “Demeter Fragrance Library stands out from the designer fragrance crowd by bottling down-to-earth scents that evoke pleasant memories and experiences of everyday life” (parag. 1). Founder Christopher Brosius explains,

We want each scent to transport the user back to a special place or time. For example, Bonfire is based upon burning maple leaves after raking in the fall. Golden Delicious is about trips I made to the apple storage room at the nearby orchard with my father (Demeter Fragrance Library, 2003, parag. 3).

In fact they have even bottled the essence of the Madeleine!⁹ There need be caution in using the terms ‘nostalgia’ and ‘memory’ interchangeably. Lupton (1996) explains that nostalgia can create a kind of yearning for the past that “may instigate individuals’

⁹ Other sweet nostalgic scents include cinnamon bun, birthday cake, orange cream pop, waffles and apple pie. The gamut of scents is not relegated only to the nostalgia evoked by sweets. Nostalgic non-food related scents include dirt, geranium, mesquite, thunderstorm, laundromat and, wait for it...Play-Doh. Others scents seem to be a little more obscure and specialized in their nostalgic evocations, like lobster, funeral home, mildew, paint and something called ‘Redhead in Bed’ (!). As a comment to what this all

attempts to recreate an aspect of this past life by reproducing activities related to the rosy recollections of it” (p. 50). She concurs that the possibly fictional, idealized version of childhood fuelled by the emotion of nostalgia are what food companies use as selling points. It seems that companies like The Demeter Fragrance Library counted on the same potential of nostalgic emotion associated with scents.

Chu and Downs (2000) review the literature pertaining to the evidential reliability concerning the Proust phenomenon that is “whether odours are especially potent in reminders of autobiographical recall” (parag. 10). The results of various studies are debated on several grounds. For one, results of performance in recall from odour cues are often coming from only a few minutes of delay between study and test. For another, when other sense modality cues are used along with scents to ‘test’ memory, results are not addressing the Proust phenomenon because they are associating sensory cues to specific items. Autobiographical memories align themselves with sensory cues in a natural, unintentional manner. It still remains a mystery as to whether odours are the best sensory cues to trigger memory. What *is* conclusive in all the literature reviewed by Chu and Downes, however, is that olfactory cues *can* function as memory cues, that the memories called upon are very vivid, generally old and emotional. It has been demonstrated in fact that odours hold a stronger emotional and evocative connection to personal memories than do the senses of sight or sound (Chu & Downes, 2000; Herz, 2004). Proust’s protagonist concurs: “The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in

means, the company has cleverly invented an odour called “This is not a Pipe”, based on Magritte’s famous surrealist painting of the same name, which questions the idea of perception.

the meantime, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days..." (parag. 11).

The Proust phenomenon is greatly debated, as other psychological rationales claim that sight, sound and touch have sensory memory stores, but taste and smell are hardly included due partly to difficulties in measuring when "the actual physical sensation is gone and memory begins" (Crowder & Surprenant, 2000). What may also hinder research is that we lack the language and cannot literally *name* that which we perceive while we taste or smell.¹⁰ The lack of research perhaps emphasizes our acceptance of the Cartesian paradigm of the world where the body is separate from consciousness (Garber, 2003) as also noted in the previous chapter.

Proposing an alternative, where bodily experiences such as taste and smell can reveal knowledge, be it autobiographical or environmental, remains at once groundbreaking and challenging. Perhaps it is only natural, given the history of its boundary-breaking tendencies that such endeavours were long ago explored within the artistic community.

¹⁰ This is exemplified again in that we only have four names for taste and in that we tend to associate basic tastes 'sweet', 'sour', 'bitter' and 'salty', to much of what we smell. (Stevenson and Boakes, 2004). This is the principle behind 'synaesthesia', which will be discussed, in greater detail in the next section.

Taste and Smell and Art and Artists

Using a standard definition of *aesthetics*—a set of principles of good taste and appreciation of beauty¹¹—and applying it to art, it is accepted that sight and sound have been the dominant Western sensory models for perceiving and judging art since antiquity (Berleant, 2004). It is ironic then that the word taste is reserved for the judgement of what we are told can only be seen or heard. With the 18th century came the Enlightenment and with it the philosophical theory that qualified the senses of taste, smell and touch as specifically non-aesthetic, ruled as relying on *bodily* pleasures (Fischer, 1999). As such taste and smell “do not have the requisite distance that draws attention away from the body to an external aesthetic object.” (Korsmeyer, 1998, p. 451). Contemporary art supported a change in thought when installation artists no longer asked viewers to rely on perceptual qualities, but rather on concepts and physical interaction with the work (Korsmeyer, 1998; Gonzales, 1998). The advent of installation art certainly helped to validate the senses of taste and smell as part of an embodied acceptance of perception and meaning-making supported by past and contemporary artistic endeavours.

Korsmeyer’s (1999) philosophy theorizes that food and eating, like art, have aesthetic properties, imbued with meaning and should not be apprehended with a philosophy that perceives beauty strictly through sight. Both Korsmeyer and cultural historian Constance Classen (1999) contest conventional definitions of ‘aesthetic’. Classen furthers the argument for crossing sensory borders in the arts when

pointing out that the original meaning of the Greek word for ‘aesthetic’—*aisthesis*—refers to an “apprehension and interpretation of the world through the sense” (p. 2).

The psychological phenomenon of synaesthesia, or synaesthetic perception, may be of interest when discussing intersensorial experiences with food and/or art. Briefly, the synaesthetic phenomenon occurs when two sense modalities are activated by only one sensory stimulus (Gage, 1998). For example, a particular sound or musical note can be simultaneously heard and perceived as a specific colour. In *A Natural History of the Senses*, Diane Ackerman (1990) alludes to the possibility that we are born with synaesthetic capacities and that our sensory perceptions have not yet become compartmentalized. It is as we grow older that things fall into place; therefore the synaesthete’s brain has not categorized his/her sensorium into specific sections.¹² Wassily Kandinsky is said to have possessed this synaesthetic faculty (Gage, 1998).

Mainly associated with neurology, synaesthesia impacted the art world most notably in the late nineteenth century with the French Symbolist artists who sought to explore a simultaneous sensory aesthetic. (Gage, 1998; Classen 1999). In Gustave Moreau’s *Salome Dancing Before Herod* (1876), Classen points out the various sensual references such as the tactile representation of clothing and ornate décor, the “overblown roses”, the lute player, and the censer expelling incense (p. 112) (figure 1). She also notes that “Salome herself has her eyes closed, emphasizing the dream-like nature of her dance. She is guided not by her eyesight, but by the magical sight of the ‘third-eye’

¹¹ From *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

dangling from a bracelet on her outstretched arm” (p. 193). This closed eye appears frequently in Symbolist painting and often refers to the search of an ethereal inner vision of what the Symbolist artists’ sense rather than what they see (Classen, 1999). Interest in synaesthetic possibilities permeated not only the work of the artists of the time, but also made its way into literature (Charles Beaudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud) and classical music (Claude Debussy)¹³.



Figure 1.
Moreau, Gustave. (1876). *Salome Dancing Before Herod*. In N. Hodge & L. Anson. (Eds.) (1996). *The A-Z of Art: The World's Greatest Artists and their Work*. London: Carlton Books Limited, p. 272.

Two early 20th Century art movements were highly influenced by the Symbolist promotion of a multisensory aesthetic. Artists of the Italian Futurist movement sought “the aesthetic potential of a wide range of sensory properties” and “non-visual

¹² The closest reference I have found to support this is in Gage (1998) who points to studies showing that a phenomenon like “coloured hearing” is more common in children than in adults.

sensations” in the more chaotic, fast-paced technological world of modernity with its loud noises and speeding cars (Classen, 1999, p. 127 – 128). Artists belonging to the Surrealist movement explored the idea of multisensoriality by relying on the subconscious to depict images that consciously did not make sense, which in turn questioned the ‘rationality’ generally attributed to sight (Classen, 1999) (fig. 2).

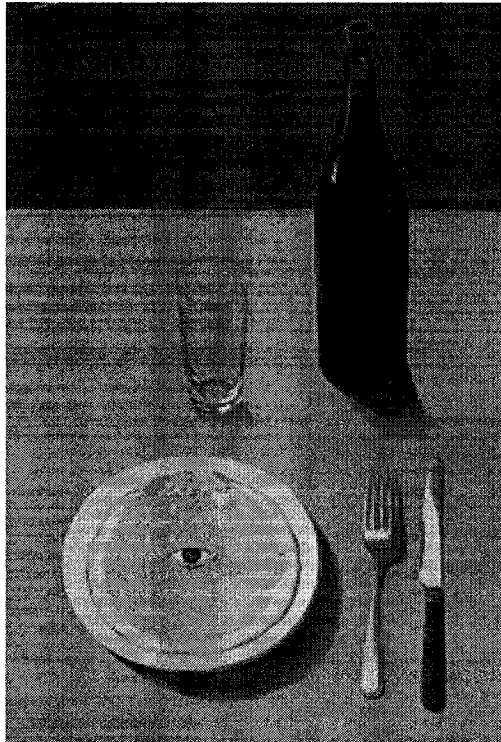


Figure 2.
Magritte, René (1935). *The Portrait*. In Waldberg, P. (1965). *René Magritte*. Bruxelles: André De Rache, p. 160.

Classen (1999) notes that the beginning of the twentieth century gave rise to a separation of the senses and their ‘intersensoriality’ fell from favour in modern art because modernists were more interested in the disruption of traditional structures and

¹³ Although the Symbolists were fascinated with the idea of synaesthesia as a state of being wherein the senses were unconsciously corresponding with one another, it is important to note that they often attempted to simulate synaesthesia with voluntary forays into experimental drug use (Gage, 1998; Classen 1999).

boundaries of representation. Interest in the artistic potential of the olfactory and gustatory senses seemed to have been renewed in the 1960s with artistic endeavours such as Daniel Spoerri's inauguration of the *Eat Art Gallery* where artists resigned themselves to the making of comestible art (Paré, 2000) and the next forty years would have no shortage of artists dealing with the olfactory and gustatory senses (Boucher, 2003).

Since the mid nineties, it seems that the number of contemporary artists acknowledging food, taste and/or smell in their work is making a broader cultural impact as we notice the emergence of group exhibitions and large scale collaborations on the topic. Such exhibitions include Toronto's *Foodculture* show (1998), Spain's *Comer o no comer* (To Eat or not to Eat) (2002-2003), the enormous multisensory interactive installation at the Prague Quadrennial (2003), *Hors d'oeuvre, ordre et désordre de la nourriture* in Lyon, France (2004-2005), *Orange: l'évènement d'art actuel* in St-Hyacinthe, Quebec (2003) and most recently, the Chelsea Art Museum's *The Food Show: The Hungry Eye* (2006-2007) in New York City and *Sensorium: Embodied experience Technology, and Contemporary Art* (2007) at MIT's List Visual Arts Center.

Of particular interest to this research are contemporary artists and artworks that consider taste and smell—or food— a) as important in reconnecting the mind and the body, b) as questioning occularcentric perceptual paradigms, and c) as linked to memory.¹⁴

¹⁴ Many of the aforementioned artists do not deal exclusively within the themes of the senses, but I have included most of them based on one artwork. It is important to note also that the works included above are not bound to only one of the aforementioned categories. Creating these categories however has lead me to

Among the artists in the first category is Catya Plate. In her exhibition, *Extra Sensory Perception* (2003), she creates five installation ‘triptychs’ that engage each of our senses by having the audience directly interact with the work. With both the smell and the taste pieces the spectator is invited to sniff little vials of scents and savour bits of foodstuffs from small plastic pouches (figs. 3, 4, 5, 6). Plate states: “The message here is that the separation of body and mind is increasing and may be detrimental to us and our surroundings. The paintings offer a playful opportunity to reconnect with our senses” p.1). She continues that upon opening the paintings, which are akin to religious altars in form, the viewer is faced with an opportunity to “look directly at their insides to draw conclusions about one’s existence” and thereby possibly become open to intangible experiences (p.1).

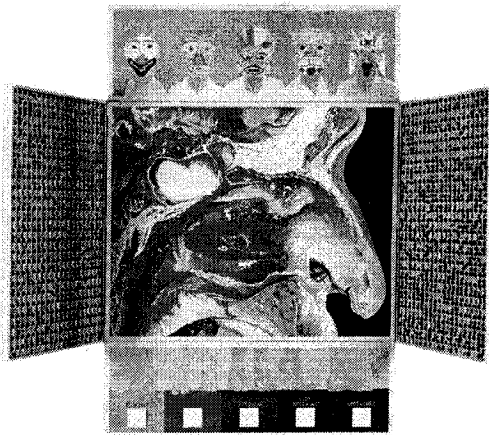


Figure 3.
Plate, Catya (1997). *1001 Smells*. In Plate,
Catya. (2003). *Extra Sensory Perception*.
San Bernardino, CA: Robert V. Fullerton Art
Museum, California State University, p. 10

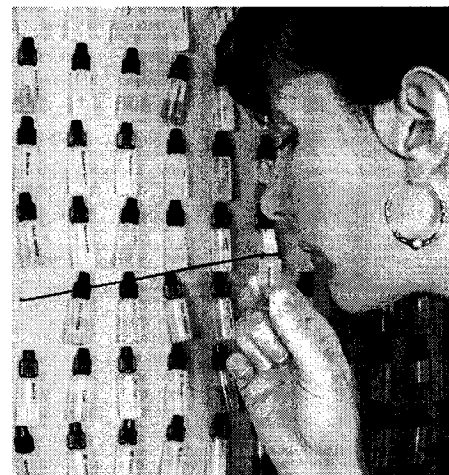


Figure 4.
Plate, Catya (1997). *1001 Smells*, detail, p. 11

include and explore a greater number of artworks rather than eliminate on the basis of a single category that encompasses all three.

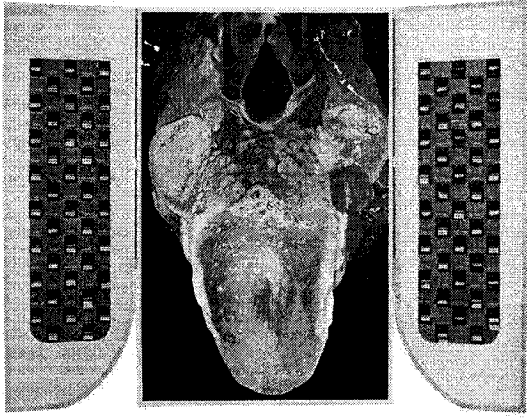


Figure 5.
Plate, Catya (2000). *A Matter of Taste*. In Plate,
Catya. (2003). *Extra Sensory Perception*. San
Bernardino, CA: Robert V. Fullerton Art
Museum, California State University, p. 14



Figure 6.
Plate, Catya (2000). *A Matter of Taste*, detail, p. 15

In *Alokhayasan: Temple of the Mind* (1995-96), a 3.2 metre structure made of wood, brass and herbs, Thai artist Montien Boonma “invites us to experience healing of the body, mind, and soul in a sacred enclosure, or “place without sickness” (arokhayasala) where boxes are stuffed with medicinal and aromatic herbs” (The Asia Art Society, 2005, parag. 1) (fig. 7).

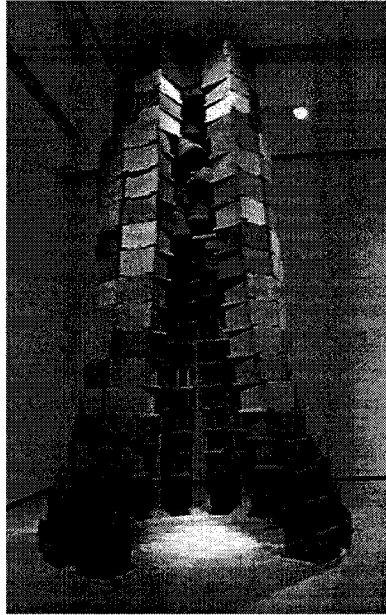


Figure 7.
Boonma, Montien. (1995-96). *Alokhayasan: Temple of the Mind*, From Asia Society, the. (2005). *Moutien Boonma: Temple of the Mind*. Retrieved December 2nd, 2006, from <http://www.asiasociety.org/arts/boonma/temple/index.html>.

Questioning and trying to re-order our constant dependence on sight as the most important mode of perception figures in works such as those by Meg Weber and Diane Borsato. Weber's *Butter Wall* (1998) confronts the viewer's sense of perception by forcing a kind of discord of the senses (fig. 8). A large wall of butter emits a very sweet smell while the butter itself is moulding and rotting before our very eyes. (Drobnik, 1999). In *Artifacts in my Mouth* (2003) Borsato was given permission to put several museum artefacts in her mouth so that she may connect with them on a more intimate level, through mouth feel and her sense of smell, very much like an infant would (Blouin, 2003, p. 41) (fig. 9).¹⁵

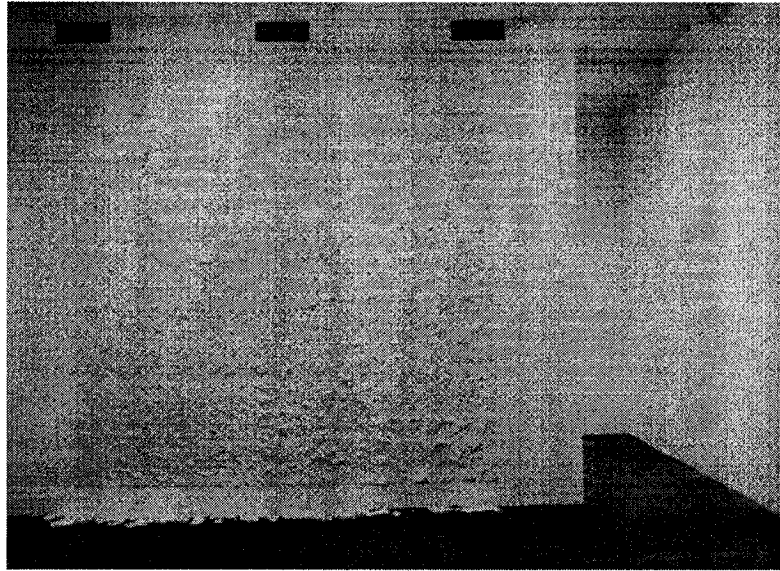


Figure 8.
Weber, Meg. (1998) *Butter Wall*. In Fischer, B. (Ed.) (1999). *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art*. Toronto, Canada: YYZ Books, p. 73.

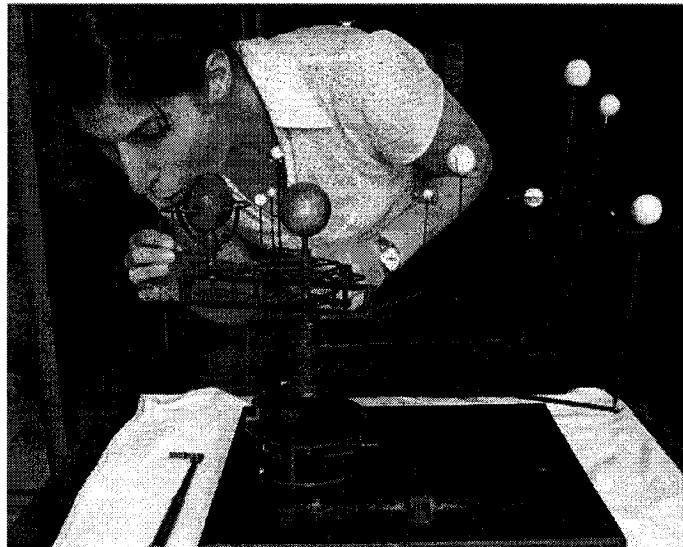


Figure 9.
Borsato, Diane. (2003). *Artifacts in my Mouth*. From In M. Boucher. (Ed.) (2003). *Orange : l'événement d'art actuel de Saint-Hyacinthe*. Saint-Hyacinthe, Québec: Expression, Centre d'exposition de Saint-Hyacinthe, p.

¹⁵ Other artworks within category b) include Christine Lebel *Chocolate Lady* (1999), Mark Lewis *An Odour of Disorder* (1992), Millie Chen *Meat Speech* (2003), Claudia Gagnon *Marchandises* (2003), Althea Thauberger *Free Food!* (2003).

Canadian artist Janet Cardiff has activated audiences' bodily interactivity with art by having them engage their senses of sound, touch and sight in some of her installations (fig. 10). Through the activation of these senses, Cardiff explores the construction of personal knowledge and how the senses bring forth memories. (Youmans, 2002; Christov-Bakargiev, 2001). In *The Dark Pool* (1995-96) hidden sensors trigger voices, sounds and narrative in a multisensory situation where audiences are also treated to scents of tea and oranges as they try to 'make sense' of what appears to be an abandoned research space (Christo, 2000; Krstich, 2003) (fig. 11).

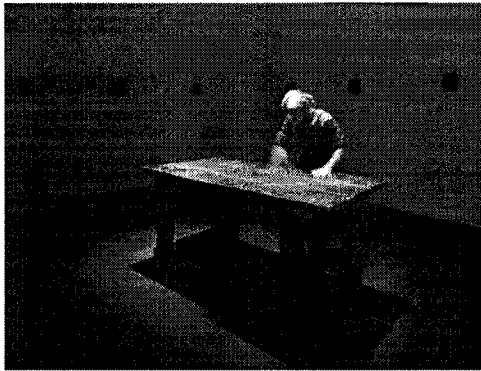


Figure 10.
Cardiff, Janet. (1996). *To Touch*. From Egoyan, A. (2002). *Janet Cardiff by Atom Egoyan*. Retrieved February 10th, 2007, from <http://www.bombsite.com/cardiff/cardiff.html>, p. 2.

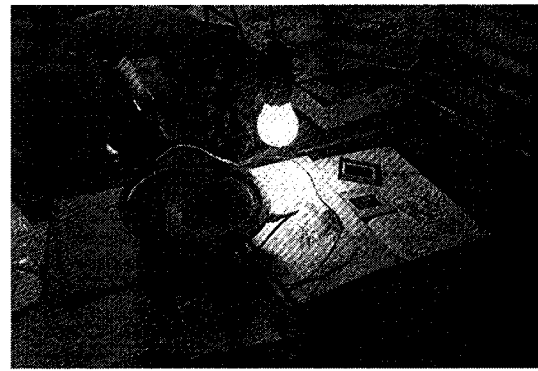


Figure 11.
Cardiff, Janet & George Bures Miller. (1995-96). *The Dark Pool*. In n. a. (1995) Janet Cardiff and George Bures Miller: *The Dark Pool*. In *Canadian Art*. Fall, 37, p. 31.

Doug Hammett's *Finger Licks* (1994) installation, features wood mouldings covered in heavily scented cake frosting (Drobnik, 1999) (fig. 12). The trace of the finger that has left its mark all along the frosting's path through the corridor of the installation space seems to summon similar childhood confectionery desires.

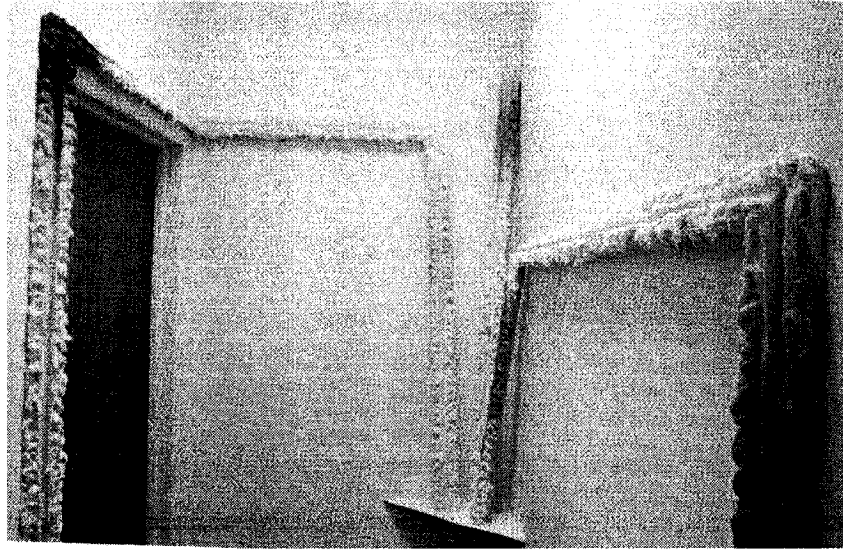


Figure 12.
Hammett, Doug. (1994). *Finger Licks*. In B. Fischer (Ed.) (1999). *Foodculture: Tasting Identities and Geographies in Art*. Toronto, Canada: YYZ Books, p. 71.

Some artists exploring food as a theme dealing with memory and desire, such as American artists Wayne Thiebaud and Will Cotton, have tackled the relationships through painting. Thiebaud's paintings of sweets, cakes and pies describe an almost palpable surface, whose textures and colours are akin to frosting or cream and offer audiences a glimpse into the artist's childhood longings (Nash, Gopnik 2000) (figs. 13, 14).¹⁶

¹⁶ On another sensorial note, Marechal-Workman (2002) has made a kinaesthetic reference to Thiebaud's San Francisco urban landscapes by comparing them to feelings of vertigo.

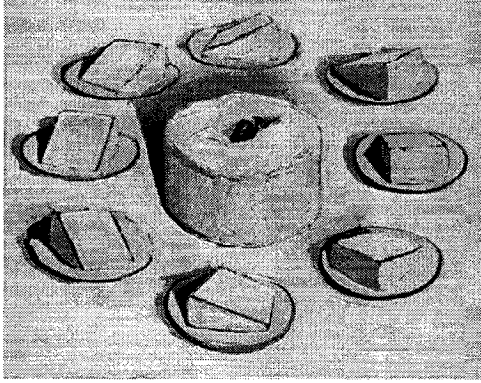


Figure 13.
Thiebaud, Wayne. (1962). *Around the Cake*.
In Marechal-Workman, A. (2002). Wayne
Thiebaud. In S. Pendergast, S. and T.
Pendergast, (Eds). *Contemporary Artists* (5th
ed.). Detroit, MI: St-James Press, p. 81.

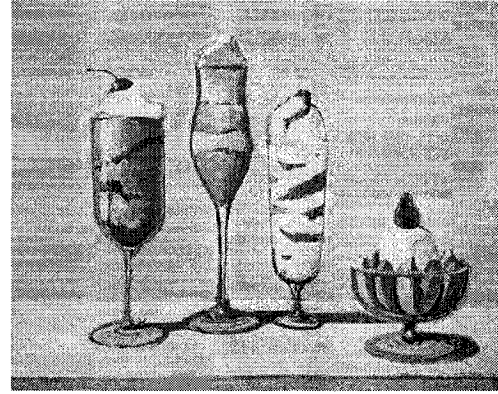


Figure 14.
Thiebaud, Wayne. (1963). *Confections*. In
Marechal-Workman, A. (2002). Wayne
Thiebaud. In S. Pendergast, S. and T.
Pendergast, (Eds). *Contemporary Artists* (5th
ed.). Detroit, MI: St-James Press, p. 85.

Cotton's works seem to play with childhood desire for mouth-watering sweets through large architectural candy landscapes (figs. 15, 16). Like Hammett's installations, Cotton's images make reference to "childhood celebrations and fairy-tale fantasies of edible architecture" (Drobnik, p. 72). The artist asserts that while contemplating his work, American audiences will often reference the children's board game *Candyland* while European audiences mention the Hansel and Gretel tale (W. Cotton, personal communication, April 14, 2006). Though Cotton has expressed that he does not paint with the idea of whether or not audiences will be able to recall certain tastes or smells, he is adamant about recalling the olfactory and gustatory experiences for himself. "I am trying to get something out of myself that recalls that and that's where I go... I can recall my own experiences that way [through taste and smell]; and that's why it's incredibly

important for me to have the things [the confections he uses as models] around so there's been a recent association.” (W. Cotton, personal communication, April 14, 2006).¹⁷

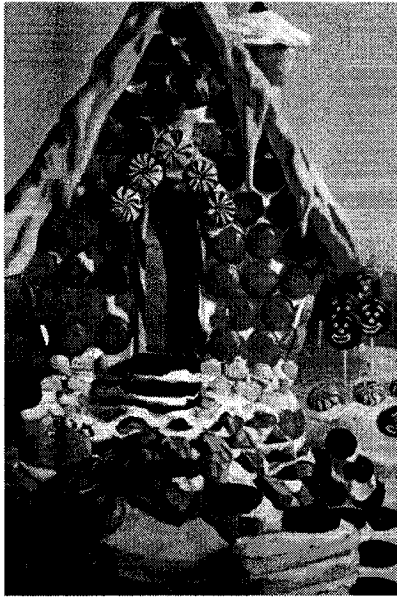


Figure 15.
Cotton, Will (1998-99). *Candy House*. In
Cotton, W. (2004). *Will Cotton: Paintings
1999-2004*. Exhibition catalogue, Galerie
Daniel Templon, Paris, p. 17.



Figure 16.
Cotton, Will (2003). *Forest*. From Stennet, A. (n. d.)
Will Cotton. Retrieved December 3rd, 2005, from
<http://www.willcotton.com/>

Boucher (2003a) speculates that the artistic and research interest in food and art currently being undertaken is due to several factors. One factor pertains to relational art where exchange between individuals can occur and artists seem to be working more and more within a framework of communication and cooperation. Also, “food gives rise to work that may be permanent or ephemeral, stable or evolvable, liquid to solid...one color to another...” (p. 174). These properties connote food as having materiality and a kind of production value, which work to defy “the notion of artistic perception involving only sight” (p. 174).

¹⁷ Other artists within category c) include Diane Borsato *The Broth* (2003), Kim Dawn *Looking for Love*

Drobnik concurs that in providing a space for intimacy with our bodies through our senses of taste and smell, the above artists and artworks help to “repudiate and exploit the olfactory and gustatory senses as primitive senses” (p. 78). Furthermore they challenge “the distance and detachment central to visually-based aesthetic theories” (p. 74). Likewise in *Rethinking Aesthetics*, Berleant (2004) notes that different responses to the same aesthetic stimuli can occur if we acknowledge the physical in the aesthetic experience. This would suggest that “the aesthetic experience is at its fullest and richest in sensory experience of the whole person. The human person as undivided, integral entity is now involved in the aesthetic event” (p. 79).

3. SWEET SURRENDER: Methodology and procedure

Methodology

Considering at recent research into sensory awareness and perception in cultural theory, philosophy and psychology,, my aim was to create a body of art combining my understanding of the theoretical research on taste and smell with my immediate experiences of these as modes of perception. I wanted to relate these two senses to a personally meaningful phenomenon of memory triggered by food. I bracketed the research topic specifically within the realm of sweets, desserts and candy, due to their generally highly attractive appearance and frequent association to the past through childhood memories and/or nostalgia.

This studio-based inquiry was governed by the qualitative research practice of *art as research* as explored by Graeme Sullivan (2004, 2005). This methodology grounds the artistic practice in investigations of how knowledge and understanding are yielded in the studio experience. The methods by which new knowledge and understanding are acquired involve a framework of gathering information “*in art*”, “*about art*”, “*of art*” and “*through art*” by connecting the domains of art practice and theory (Sullivan, 2004, p. 802). Sullivan states that the four branches are in constant relationship with one another, have flexibility and should not be considered as boundaries, but as ‘links among various studio-based learning processes’ (2004, p.804).

Since an artistic endeavour was to be the summation of my research inquiry, I adapted Dr. Clark Moustaka's (1990) heuristic methodology to gather data and arrive at my outcome. Comprised of six phases—*initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, illumination, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis*—the methodology engages the researcher in understanding the research question, or 'personal challenge', primarily from a subjective point of view. An 'answer' is achieved by gathering data filtered through the individual's "senses, perceptions, beliefs, and judgements" (p.15).

Initial engagement is established through an inward awareness of "an intense interest" derived from the researcher, who will "elucidate the context from which the question takes form and significance" (Moustakas, p. 27). Upon the establishment of the question, a total *immersion* in the topic was essential to the gathering of data in that "the researcher lives the question in waking, sleeping, and even dream states. Everything in [the researcher's] life becomes crystallized around the question" (p. 28). Next, the *incubation* period of the process takes over. It is during this phase that "the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition [continue] to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside immediate awareness" (Moustakas, p. 29). This phase is not unlike finding a set of misplaced keys the moment one stops thinking about them (Moustakeas, 1990). Then, *illumination* is said to occur with a kind of awakening to new components of the question or research; "a modification of an old understanding, a synthesis of fragmented knowledge, or an altogether new discovery of something that has

been present for some time, yet beyond immediate awareness” (p. 30). This phase is likened to noticing something new in a photograph one has seen many times before.

The fifth step in heuristics is *explication*. This involves the researcher in an effort to organize and make adjustments to the meanings gathered thus far, while attending to his or her own awareness and thoughts “as a prelude to the understanding that is derived from conversations and dialogues with others” (p. 31). The final phase, the *creative synthesis*, involves the amalgamation of what is both concretely understood and intuited about the research question into some kind of creative depiction.

Procedure

The written component of the studio inquiry had me navigating between the four branches of Sullivan’s framework. From Sullivan’s domain of practice as the *artist*, the point of my inquiry was to seek individual understanding from personal insight by researching “how knowledge is created *in* art making” (p. 802). In looking into and trying to link theoretical, historical and contemporary accounts of the senses of taste and smell in art making practices, I crossed into Sullivan’s structure of research *about* art, where my data source came from others rather than from insight. Third, by contemplating and analyzing other artists’ and my own artwork, research *of* art furthered the concept of *art as research*. Sullivan explains that the artwork itself “is an individually and culturally constructed form that can be used to represent ideas and thus can be examined as a source of knowledge” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 803). Finally, in trying to

contextualize this inquiry within my own studio and teaching practices, I crossed into researching *through* art, “so as to determine the many functions and purposes to which art can be put” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 803).

I looked to heuristics as the methodology for the studio portion of the thesis due to its explicit focus on the process of delivering some kind of end product. Within the heuristic process, in creating a personal challenge for myself, I established *initial engagement* through the research question, *how can I utilize the senses of taste and smell within my studio practice in the visual arts?* The question was fueled primarily by my interest in food and in experientially-based artwork.¹⁸

I tackled the *immersion* process through a continuous search for taste’s and smell’s impact at every turn within my immediate experiences. This was the longest process, as it began around September of my second year of coursework in the Master’s program and continued throughout the year and into the following September. From self-dialogues based on theoretical and practice-oriented findings, to conversations with friends and family, to gastronomical and olfactory expeditions on a month-long trip to France and to similar hedonic pursuits in my own kitchen and neighborhood, I kept account of it all through sketchbook and journal responses, notes, artistic plans and experiments. I collected magazine and newspaper articles and photographed images. I

¹⁸ For a more detailed account of how *initial engagement* led to the research question, see the “rationale” section in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

also looked to past travel journals for instances of gastronomic or olfactory musings. I photographed food I ate in restaurants, at weddings, dinner parties and in bakery windows. Part of this stage in the inquiry was made up of my concrete sensory experiences with sweets and candy, occurring once a day over a two-week period, which I recorded in journal entries and audio tape. A large segment of the data during this process comes from an almost daily attempt to configure and plan the studio components in my sketchbook.

In returning to my employment as a high school art teacher, I tried to allow the *incubation* phase of the heuristic methodology take place. I abandoned all experiential research and theoretical reading on matters dealing with memory, food and the senses of taste and smell, and focused my endeavours on preparing my students for the school year.

The *illumination* phase occurred approximately at the end of September wherein I was able to establish more clearly the ideas I wanted to convey in my work as well as those I could omit. This led to *explication*, which involved going back to the many sketches and plans in my sketchbook and pinpointing only those I felt were the most evocative, most connected to both the theory and personal experiences, as well as logistically achievable. It is during this phase that I brought my plans and sketches to the attention of other artists, professors and friends and family to help me gauge whether or not my sketches and plans seemed to evoke some of the ideas I was seeking to portray.

The entire heuristic method brought together theory, experience and my understanding of the two in *creative synthesis*, which I expressed through four

installation works. From *Initial Engagement* to *Creative Synthesis*, including the writing of the thesis, the process took approximately one year and a half.

Data

Once *initial engagement* led to my research question, I embarked on the lengthy *immersive* process by looking at artists that somehow engaged the senses of taste and smell. Having decided already on the anchoring theme of candy and memory, it made it fairly easy to focus my energies on the more logistical aspects of the incorporation of taste and smell in other artists' work. How were they doing it? What stood out for me in their work? Which works projected in me a fuller sense of embodiment as a viewer? Those that I could only access in books posed a problem in that obviously I could not physically interact and assess my experience of them. I simply reflected on my initial impressions of the works and on what critics and curators had written about them in terms of their relationship with the senses. Although actual projects attempting to stimulate audiences through their senses other than sight were not abundant, it would seem that installation art—an art form where the viewer in some way physically engages with and experiences the work (Lucie-Smith, 2004)—was the ideal medium to tackle the challenge of offering audiences interactive experiences with their senses. With this, I began to formulate some ideas about the artwork through plans in my sketchbook.

In reading as much theoretical literature as I could about the topic, I found that one reading often led to another within a different discipline. For example, in reading

about aesthetic perception, I was led to intersensory perception, which led to synaesthesia, which led to reading about the Symbolist movement and this in turn led me to cultural anthropology.

When I broached the subject of taste, smell and candy with friends and family it was a rather natural occurrence that many talked about childhood memories, and lengthy discussions about the hedonic aspects of food always ensued. What was most interesting is that everyone I spoke with had an opinion or an insight to share and seemed genuinely excited about the topic. Without being prompted, many recounted some of their own memories and experiences with food¹⁹ or pointed me towards items they had come across in various forms such as newspaper articles and internet images (appendix 1). In France, the presentation of the food from city markets to local patisseries seemed always carefully rendered. My strict two-week 'study' of various sweets and candies, needless to say, was highly enjoyable. The tastings offered a regiment that sometimes yielded nothing of any great significance, but at the very least I was conditioning myself to pay attention to sensual perception through my mouth and nose. I wanted to understand the embodiment aspect of my experiences with food in order to transfer into theme for studio. The flavour of violet syrup, for example, impacted me so strongly that I purchased violet perfume from a renowned *parfumerie* so that I might be brought back to the warm, lazy afternoons in Provence. Back home, I purposely sought out some of the candy I ate as a child. Once the candy was on my tongue, I was easily transported back in time and could recall little narratives about specific moments from my childhood.

I noticed something in my journal entries from the aforementioned experiences that I had previously not paid attention to. This was how *mouthfeel*, or texture of the food, can often elicit perceptual knowledge along with taste and smell, beyond the pleasant/unpleasant. An entry from my sketchbook read: “I still haven’t mastered the crust. It’s still doughy in the middle; I can feel the pastiness in contrast with the silky smooth texture of the filling. I need to roll it out thinner and bake it a little longer before I put the filling in”. Another example of this occurred when I was trying to draw from memory a multi-layered piece of pie I had eaten. I could not visualize the order of layers until I read my description that the chocolate layer was too moist. This could only mean that the ‘wet’ pear layer rested atop the chocolate, causing the moisture from the pears to seep into the chocolate. I was then able to more accurately draw the pie²⁰. This observation served as one of many examples of some of the tangents I kept coming across, which, although I thought were moments of heuristic *illumination*, actually stunted my progress as I will describe later in upcoming paragraphs.

I have no doubt that we experience these sensually based perceptions all the time, but, unless we are trained chefs²¹, we are hardly aware of them. Although focused on

¹⁹ One colleague recounted her experience of going to the symphony in the 70s in Montreal, where audience members were given scented cards they were to scratch during specific movements of the musical performance.

²⁰ Some of the most entertaining accounts of mouth feel I encountered come from Steve Almond’s (2004) novel, *Candyfreak* and Tim Richardson’s (2002) *Sweets: A History of Candy*.

²¹ It goes without saying that trained chefs should have sharp and well-attuned gustatory and olfactory perception. That these reveal knowledge beyond what is considered good or bad food was expressed during one of my trips to fulfill more of the *Immersion* process at a chocolate factory. Upon tasting a new chocolate banana flavour of ice cream, one of my friends who is a trained chef commented on the grainy texture of the ice cream and wrinkled her nose. She stated that at some point in the production line of this

taste and smell, the mouthfeel perceptions revealed in the data fuel the multisensory phenomenon that “our senses are designed to function in concert and that our brains are organized to use the information they derive from the various sensory channels cooperatively” (Calvert, Spence & Stein, 2004, p. xi)

During the *incubation* stage of the heuristic process, I was able to concentrate on preparing my students for the school year and my mind was on rubrics and lesson plans; the problem was that I still had to eat! In so doing, I could not *incubate* per se. Although I did no writing or formal reading about my research question, I found myself still thinking about one aspect of my research or another, perhaps due to the corporeal proximity of my research topic. In fact, the opposite occurred in that I continued to notice and to pay attention and to introspect about it all, which often led to artistic explorations of these ideas. This meant that I was unable to put my sketchbook down. I kept creating plan after plan consisting of disjointed ideas that I was not entirely satisfied with due to their constant heavy reliance on sight. I had also set up an enormous challenge for myself. In trying to answer my question by sifting through all this research, I was determined to have every work meet many criteria. In my mind the work needed to acknowledge the audience’s active participation, deal with both smell and taste, question the role of sight in perception, question the meaning of aesthetics, acknowledge the dominance of sight, evoke memory, nostalgia and possibly bring synaesthesia into play. The parameters I had placed upon my outcome worked against me being able to reach the next phase in the heuristic methodology. *Illumination* was constantly being blocked due

particular batch of ice cream, the chocolate had not been melted properly, resulting in this unpleasant granular feeling in her mouth.

to the enormous amount of extra information I was finding and the amount of fascinating tangents I pursued.²²

Illumination finally happened when I realized two things. The first was that I did not need to cast the sense of sight as unimportant, but to try to acknowledge sight as *less dominantly important*. I started to instead think about making visual what otherwise cannot be seen by the physical eye in trying to translate intangible experiences. I kept asking myself, *does this go against what I initially set out to do with taste and smell?* I decided that maybe it did a little since I didn't want to acknowledge the importance of sight in the first place. Without having sight as a part of the perceptual process, I realized, I would then be relegated to create, in their basic forms, perfumes or comestibles.

The second moment of *illumination* came a while later. While trying to fit all of the theory into my plans and sketches for the artwork, I was letting go of my central focus. Initially I was intrigued by the idea of being 'transported' back to childhood by way of taste and smell, so I went back to Marcel Proust. His hero's connection to his past through the scent and taste of the Madeleine in that one moment is so strong and emotionally charged, and this phenomenon so greatly debated in the literature, that I decided to focus on memory and perception together as an overarching theme. Instead of

²² For instance, doctors used to spend more time being trained to use their sense of smell to diagnose patients. The smell of garlic breath could be indicative of arsenic poisoning; fruity breath could mean starvation; baked bread might be typhoid fever. (Gibbons, 1986). I also discovered the 10th muse of the arts, Gasteria, who inspired renowned 18th century chef Anselme Brillat-Savarin (Korsmeyer, 1999). A third example of the myriad of tangents this research revealed that there are arguments believing in more than four basic tastes such as *umami* (the taste of glutamate) and amino acids (Prescott, 2003).

being so intent on making the work be about the inclusion of taste and smell, the emphasis on memory and perception permitted me to explore the idea of simulation. This allowed for the sense of sight to play an important role in some of the work.

During the *explication* phase I made conscious decisions about what was feasibly possible to create given my time frame and intuitive decisions about which of the ideas corresponded most to memory, since at this point, they all dealt in one way or another with taste and/or smell. Evidence of this phase is seen in the evolution of some of the ideas behind the four installations through drawings and journal entries in my sketchbook (appendices 2, 3, 4). In seeking advice from peers, professors and family, I was able to somewhat gauge what an audience would understand from the work. I also sought this kind of validation so as not to make the work too esoteric and self-absorbed; after all I was still thinking, to a certain degree, about my attraction to participatory or interactive art.

The construction process of the four installations, in *creative synthesis* was fairly straightforward. However, while I allowed for intuition to run its course as I sketched and made final decisions, I noticed for the first time that all four installations were going to be very ordered, symmetrical and rather pattern-like in form. Since the purpose of the research was to try to acknowledge taste and smell in my work, I suddenly felt like the entire thing might fall apart because the constant visual rhythm was so blatant! I looked back at all of the plans and sketches I had been working on over the past year and a half and the great majority of them were permeated with grids, boxes, repetition, symmetry,

rhythm or all of the above (appendix 5, 6). This sense of order in my work is not a revelation in itself. The problem lay in that I could not seem to intuit any other way and this felt counterproductive to what I was trying to achieve. In building the four installations I realized that I needed to perceive the work as visually balanced. I was concerned then that the final outcome had suddenly become first about how the installations would be visually perceived and second about how they would be experienced.

In the next section I elaborate on each of the four installations in their completed states and explain their relationship to some of the theory presented in Chapter 2.

4. THE SPOILS OF APPETITE: The Four Installations

The following four installations are the concluding *creative synthesis* of my inquiry into how I came to *utilize the sense of taste and smell in my studio practice in the visual arts*. In discussing the installations, I use the terms ‘perceiver’ and ‘visitor’ throughout in reference to those who will potentially experience the work. This is to move away from using the term ‘viewer’, in order to put further emphasis on the notion that one does not perceive art merely through sight. The installations are presented in the order from which they evolved during the course of this research: *Scenti-mental* (2006), *Memento* (2006), *Open-up* (2006 - 2007), *Cakes my Mother Never Made* (2006-2007).

Scenti-mental

This installation is intended to create a dialogue between smell and sight perceptions. What we see through the peepholes with the eye and what we understand upon looking at the blurred images is a space filled with scent. It is odour that propels one toward the further reaches of memory. As one’s eye travels through the corridors of time toward the image, olfactory memory leads to a connection, on some level, to the image up ahead. The image is no longer necessarily blurry in the mind. It is not a guessing game. The odour has informed vision. Smelling is believing (figs. 17, 18, 19, 20 and appendix 2).

The six scents involved in *Scenti-mental* are orange, cinnamon, peppermint, maple, chocolate and lemon. They were chosen specifically for their availability in their natural state; that is, none of them are artificial. As Ackerman (1990) has noticed, “real vanilla, with its complex veils of aroma and jiggling flavors, makes the synthetic seem a parody” (p. 158). That the odours emanate from their original source was important in connecting the human experience of olfactory perception with a natural, corporeal occurrence, though we do not necessarily pay attention to its impact on recall and knowledge. I deliberately chose traditionally pleasant odours and, for the most part, scents likened to the descriptor of *sweet* due to their appeal.²³ I do not want to have the visitor’s immediate encounter be a sensory connection with any kind of danger, as can be the case with unpleasant smells (Gibbons, 1986).

The scents are also purposely those that might easily be associated with childhood events or special occasions. Though my personal associations link the images to a particular scent, it is hoped that the perceiver can make his/her own relationships due to the blurred state of the images. For instance, the scent of cinnamon is accompanied by the blurred image of a rolling pin and flour; the maple scent is linked to a scene of fall foliage. The idea was to find images that have plausible connections to the scents (for example, peppermint to a winter scene; oranges to a family picnic), but at the same time that were not so obviously connected, like the smell of cinnamon and an image of cinnamon sticks. It was also important that the images not be so personal to me that the

²³ Clearly one’s love for a particular smell can be another’s disdain for it, often due to some negative emotional event associated with that food, no matter if sweet or not (Lupton, 1996 p. 32).

visitor might be too confounded to linger. I attempted to blur the images to a resolution that would allow for some recognition, again so as not frustrating to the visitor.

By obscuring the objects one smells, the sensory experience can be understood as embodied. “The sensory experience is [no longer] perceived as coming from an object in the environment rather than from a sensory organ” (Levin-Pelchat and Blank, 2001, p. 186 - 187). In the end it is the sense of smell, once deemed a mere bodily and hence a less intellectual perceptive mode that is making sense of what is being perceived. The traditional hierarchy of the senses is called into question since it becomes olfaction, rather than the visual, that enriches the experience and recall with which we can understand the image. In getting up close and literally sticking our nose in the work, our way of perceiving this installation becomes an embodied action.

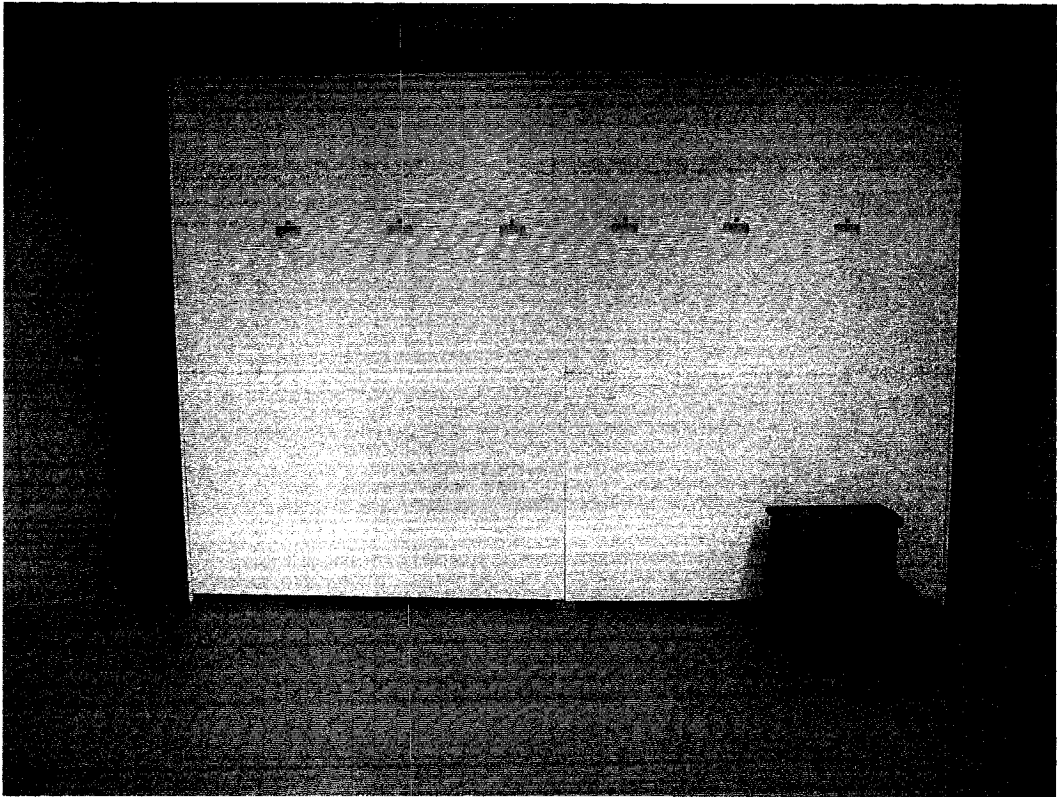


Figure 17.
Scenti-mental (2006). Installation view, 10' x 7'

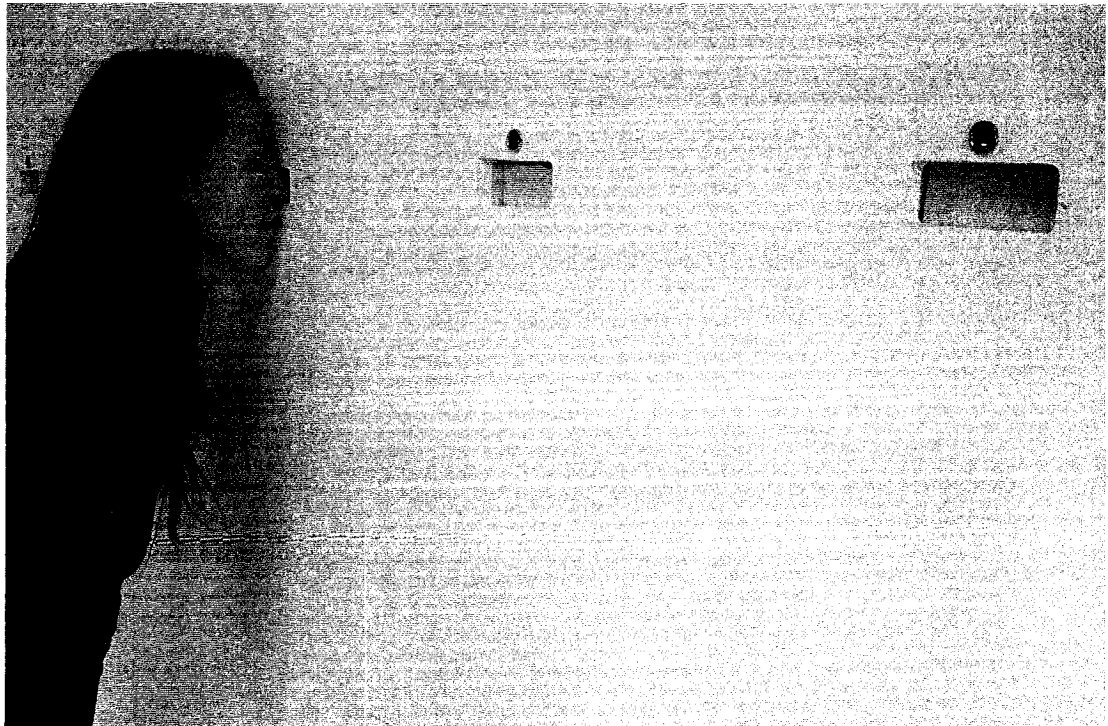


Figure 18.
Scenti-mental (2006). Detail

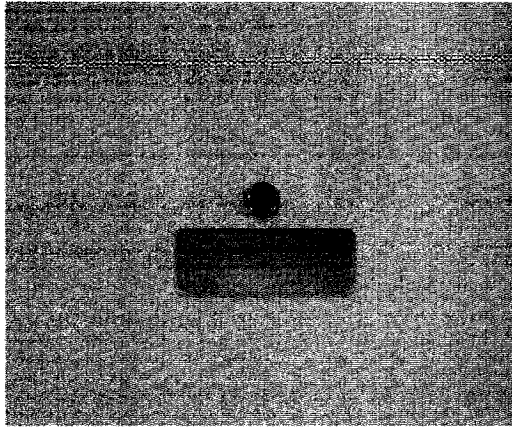


Figure 19.
Scenti-mental (2006). Detail

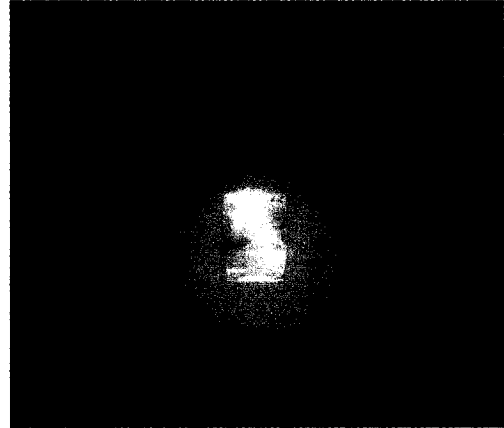


Figure 20.
Scenti-mental (2006). Detail



Figure 21.
Scenti-mental (2006). Detail

Memento

As a metaphor for the Proust phenomenon, *Memento* also elaborates a corporeal participatory element in the process of perceiving the work. The installation at first sight is an old library card catalogue. Only when its drawers are opened does it manifest into neatly hidden little reminders of days gone by. A treasure trove of candy lies in wait to unleash their evocative powers. Consuming the sweets within permits slow musings, evocations from a distant time. Suddenly, in texture, taste and smell, something quite familiar is revealed. In exchange, the moment of elucidation is left behind on an index card. Drawer upon drawer, the whole then becomes a receptacle of future memories of things past (figs. 21, 22, 24, 24).

The idea behind this piece stemmed from the use of this same card catalogue in a previous studio course²⁴. I had used it to metaphorically represent the stopping of time as it relates to one's continual search, from the moment of birth, for a perpetual goal. The idea here seems to be the opposite. The compartmentalized nature of the piece of furniture intuitively drew me to want to use it again in some other capacity. In searching through some of the sixty drawers filled with candy, the visitor is seeking, whether they want it or not and whether they will find it or not, a connection with the past. A kind of childlike curiosity takes over while the visitor is first *looking* for something familiar. The recesses of one's memory may or may not be first triggered by the visual appeal of the enchanting sweets. It is in consuming them, as Proust's protagonist exemplifies, that the days of youth are more physically, markedly revealed. For like his Madeleine cookie,

until the candy is ingested, an emotional recall from simply looking at the candy is less likely (Chu & Downes, 2000; Herz, 2004).

Should recall occur, the index cards serve as a record, a kind of acknowledgement of the Proust phenomenon as well as an understanding that the visitor's memories will always be there, and accessible again. The colour of the labels might help to recall where the visitor has left his/her memory, but it is through the interaction with the whole object, with the body, that the true location can be identified. The retrievable memory is not necessarily in the blue-labeled box—for there are several blue-labeled boxes. Rather, it is in the third box from the perceiver's left, for example. Both this and the above account of corporeal interaction with memory and understanding through taste are further explorations of embodied action.

That the perceiver is asked to consume, to physically interact with the work by putting pieces of the art work into his/her mouth creates a rethinking of traditional modes of aesthetic perception. The visitor is engaged with the gustatory sense (and, by proxy as we have discovered in Chapter 2b, with his/her olfaction) in contemplating art. This typically does not happen in the "white cube" setting of the gallery space, which then prompts questioning of the role of the institution and as well as that of the visitor's (Drobnik, 1999).

²⁴ Arte 608, given by Dr. Richard Lachapelle.

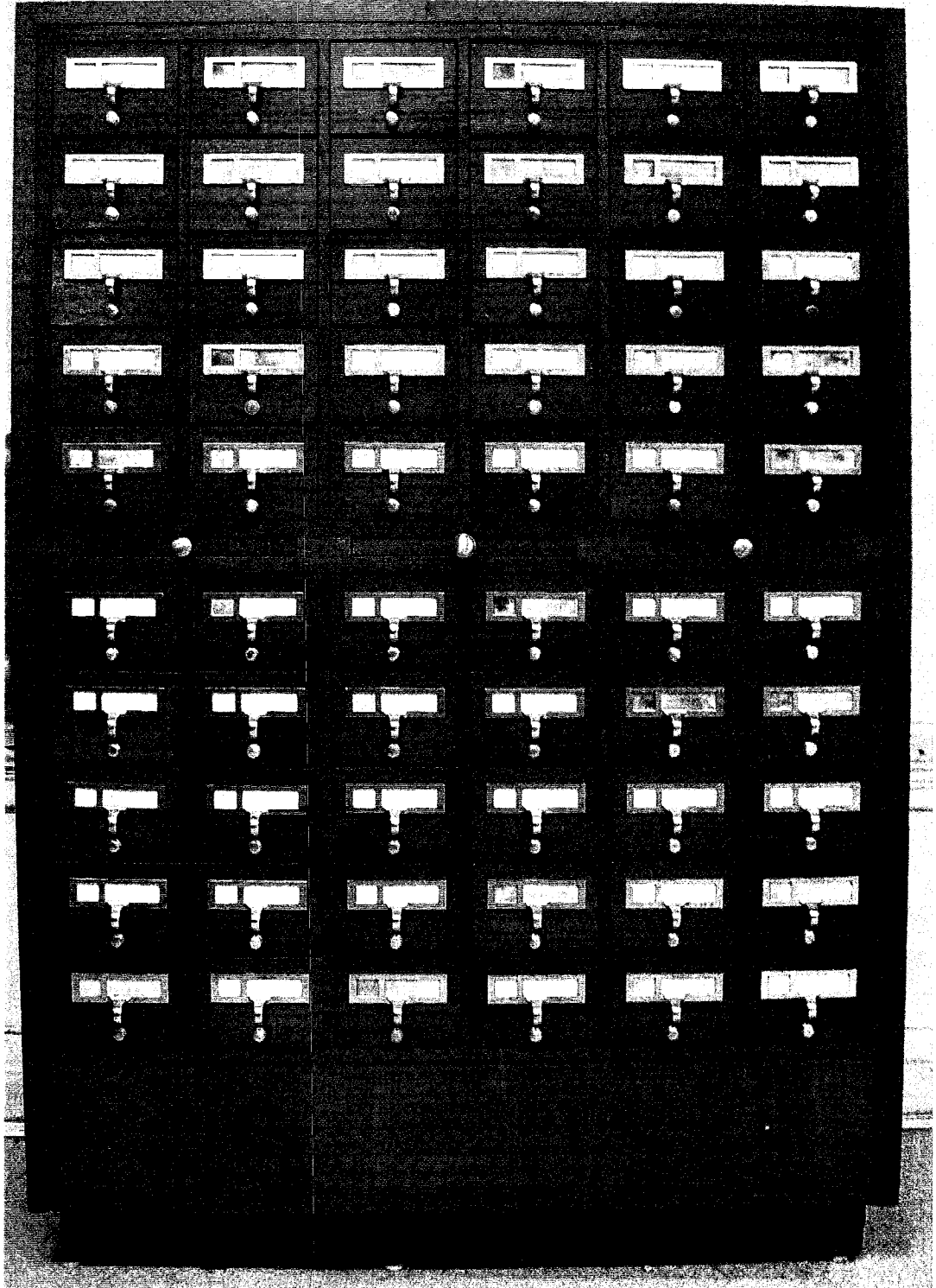


Figure 22.
Memento, 2006. Installation view, 5' x 3.5'



Figure 23.
Memento, 2006. Detail



Figure 24.
Memento, 2006. Detail

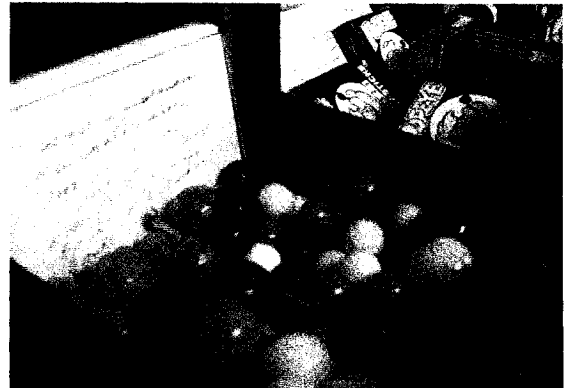


Figure 25.
Memento, 2006. Detail

Open Up

This video installation refers to the revelations of perception through the sense of taste as it relates to both texture and flavour. Through the familiar connection of candy in one's mouth, short memories from the video's participants are shared with one visitor at a time. The mouths are engulfing and *chewing on* a memory while the visitor listens to the thoughts and sounds behind each act of eating. This bears a relationship to *Memento* in that *Open Up* mirrors the act of capturing a moment in time from inside the mouth's cavity, only here it becomes a simulated act for the visitor. The sounds of chewing, slurping, popping and smacking that accompany the tales of yore conceivably incite a visceral correlation from perceiver to what is being perceived. The corporeal functions at play while eating are highlighted here for the perceiver with the help of the sound recordings and the proximity of the visitor to the mouths in the video projection. The video is contained within a kind of cabinet of curiosity, which the visitor must open in order to experience the artwork. Closing the cabinet signifies the act of preserving, or safekeeping the moment (figs. 25, 26, 27).

The element of audio is added separately in order to create an understanding through a separate sense modality. If one is looking at the work without the use of the headphones, the experience is perceived differently. The audio provides evidence of the mouth's functions and reveals the corporeal connection with the act of eating/tasting. Allowing only one visitor at a time to concentration of the mouth's noises creates intimacy. The perceptive act developing before the visitor is based entirely on the simulation of taste and touch through mouthfeel. As one contemplates the video without

the aid of the soundtrack, the simulation is incomplete, echoing Calvert's belief that the act of human perception is not propelled by one sensory mode acting alone (Calvert et al., 2004). One may intuit an understanding of the body's kinesthetic involvement in the act of eating by seeing the mouths moving; however, the intersensory experience is heightened in this case by sounds that tap into the textural components of the candies being eaten.

It seems that candy marketers were in on this long ago. Of particular interest is the example of the Pop Rocks. Almond (2004) recounts in *Candyfreak*,

And when these shards melt in someone's mouth, the gas bubbles pop. And I mean *pop*. Not just some soggy Rice Krispies-type pop, but a sound like fat crackling on a skillet—explosions, actual explosions, which registered seismically in the teeth...Not only that, but Pop Rocks tasted good, sweet, and fruity, and the different colors (cherry, grape, orange) actually had distinct flavors, not that it mattered especially because, my God they exploded! A candy that explodes! No one had ever heard of such a thing. We were all instantly nuts (Almond, 2004, p. 28).

If the visitor's taste buds are tingling, the visitor is possibly enticed to *taste* what he/she *hears*. In hearing the noises of the mouth, seeing the lips moistened with the saliva and candy's syrups, there may be something to be said about a Pavlovian response rooted in synaesthesia.

The memories shared in the video elaborate the idiosyncratic nature with which we eat certain foods, which arguably manifests itself during the heavy candy eating years. I distinctly remember the way I ate certain chocolate bars and candies and the process is instantaneous when the specific piece of candy enters my mouth, even if I have not eaten

it in years²⁵. This is largely dictated by tactility as it relates to our sense of touch within the mouth which, like vision and hearing, has sensory memory (Crowder and Surprenant, 2000). Though reminiscing about one's tales accompanying candy indulgences may or may not reveal great self-discoveries, it can still lead to an unfolding of things forgotten and often puts a smile on one's face.

This piece is exemplary of the *explication* phase of heuristics in that I fine-tuned it from its original concept with sound sensor-triggered doors into a more intimate interaction with a small cabinet and the use of headphones. In the newly conceived space, the audience is not sharing the experience on the same level as anyone else. Adding headphones means that the installation is perceived with sound for only one individual at a time (appendix 7).

²⁵ I am reminded of how I used to eat *Smarties* as a child. I would eat them one at a time, loosening and prying the candy coating away from the chocolate with my teeth and tongue, then letting the milk chocolate melt. This process was abruptly abandoned when the Nestlé Corporation bought Rowntree chocolate. Major devastation ensued. Nestlé's *Smarties* just weren't the same flavour as the Rowntree chocolate. Upon satisfying a sweet craving recently when all that was left from the Halloween loot was a small pack of *Smarties*, I gave them another chance. The *Smartie* eating ritual returned instantaneously upon the placing the first one in my mouth.

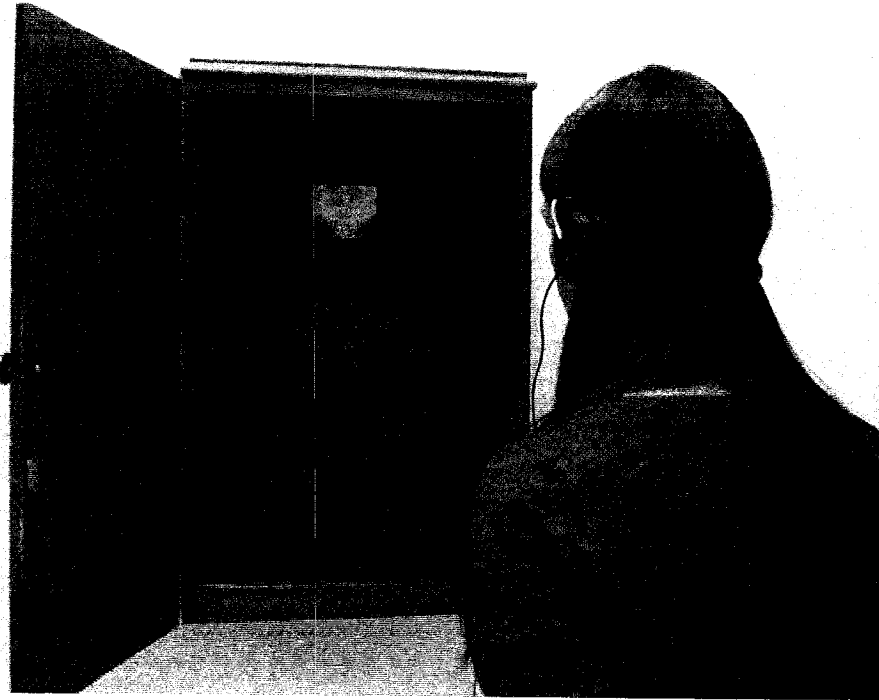


Figure 26.
Open Up (2006 -2007). Installation view, 17" x 25"

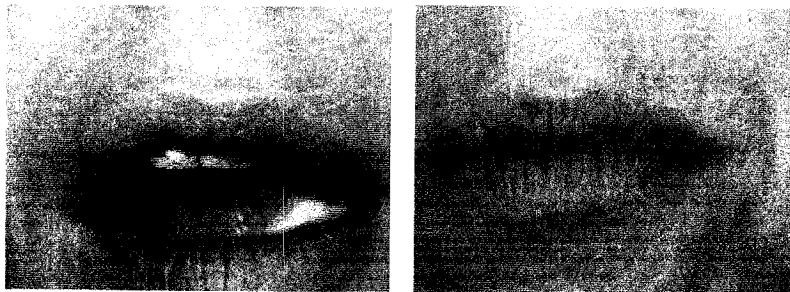


Figure 27.
Open Up (2006). Video detail

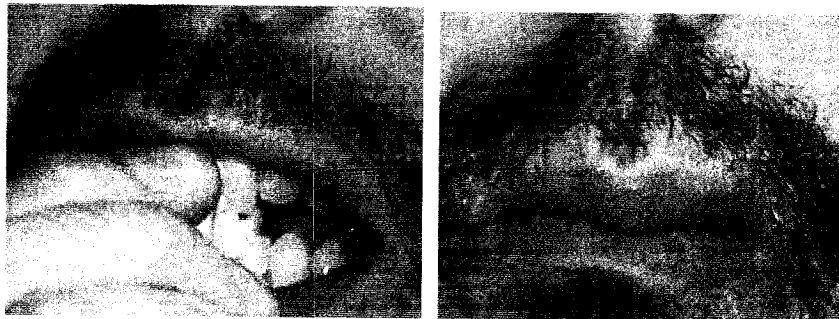


Figure 28.
Open Up (2006). Video detail

Cakes my Mother Never Made

We are cautioned about falling into a nostalgic state in that the difference between it and memory lies in the idyllic notions we tend to associate with our childhood (Lupton, 1996). *Cakes my Mother Never Made* refers to past longings that never actually occurred. The recipe cards from which the paintings and the cakes stem were in my mother's kitchen and on occasion I would specifically look at and covet the dessert cards (figs. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32).²⁶ This is not to say I had a bad childhood, on the contrary, but mine was not comprised of sentimental notions of mom baking away in the kitchen; she was at work.

The fragmented canvases represent the fine lines between nostalgia and memory where both are not necessarily occurring in our minds in chronological order. Memories seem to fade in and out of our consciousness and in recall may or may not be accurately represented in its telling or depictions. By including the recipe cards in the installation, I am acknowledging that these cakes evoke a strong link to my past, but there is no emotional connection since I never ate them, and in turn they never actually existed. In painting and building the cakes, I am physically bringing them to life, however they remain simulations since, again, I have never tasted them. It is through the heavy reliance on texture that the perceiver might imagine what these taste like. The image on the recipe card is not enough to convey this. In referring to his and Thiebaud's paintings, Will Cotton echoes the importance of tactility.

Photography doesn't have the same impact as the paintings do. I think it's partly tactile; you certainly get that in Wayne Thiebaud. I hope you get that in my paintings too, that there's the actual hand is involved, and I think that one of the greatest things about oil paint is that every single brush stroke is a recording ... is further reinforcement of an idea; and it's certainly not true of mechanical processes like photography. You're never touching it; and I have a feeling that that touch is just another chance to say more specifically what I am talking about (W. Cotton, personal communication, April 14, 2006).

In the four paintings, an element of realism is made to stand out not from a hyper-realistic, mimetic appearance, but rather from the textural quality of the paint itself. The simulation of icing hopefully imparts on the visitor a physical enticement of what it would be like to lick what appears to be frosting, to feel the cakes in their mouth. Along the same lines, Cotton believes in the visitor looking at his paintings and being capable of actually remembering the taste the painted image calls to attention,

Taste and smell both. Smell more than anything else is almost haunting. You walk into a place and you smell something familiar and it suddenly puts you right back in another time. I think there is a 'smell memory', but it's a ghostly kind of memory. Maybe that's what make it different; it's maybe more of a physical memory rather than intellectual, but in terms of sight and taste going together I feel very much like they do. I think that that's what I am getting interested in, in terms of adornment in the portraits and the way desserts in particular are dressed up for the occasion. [They're] made to look a specific way; it's supposed to relate to the taste; it's supposed to be transcendent and opulent and I think I am surprised sometimes when they don't. You look at a gorgeous cake and you take a bite and if it doesn't taste the way you want to, it can be very disturbing (W. Cotton, personal communication, April 14, 2006).

This reinforces the point of the installation's cakes having enticing odours such as vanilla and chocolate, yet the cakes are entirely simulated, made with a coloured wall spackling

²⁶ Looking at them now many years later, no wonder my mother never made them! The ingredients are bland, the icing too simple and the cakes required much construction and some assembling; what working single mother would have time?

compound atop flower arranging foam. Hence both the senses of sight and smell are deceived; the truth would only exist in the sense of taste.

Once I had completed the four paintings, hung them on the wall and assembled the simulated cakes in front of the paintings, the whole looked complete, but my intuition told me otherwise. I then created a fifth painting to satisfy my own sense of what feels right. During the planning process, four paintings seemed logical and completely satisfactory. Only in its physical manifestation did the artwork reveal an element of incompleteness. My corporeal interaction with the work was needed in order to understand that something did not feel right (Haworth, 1997).

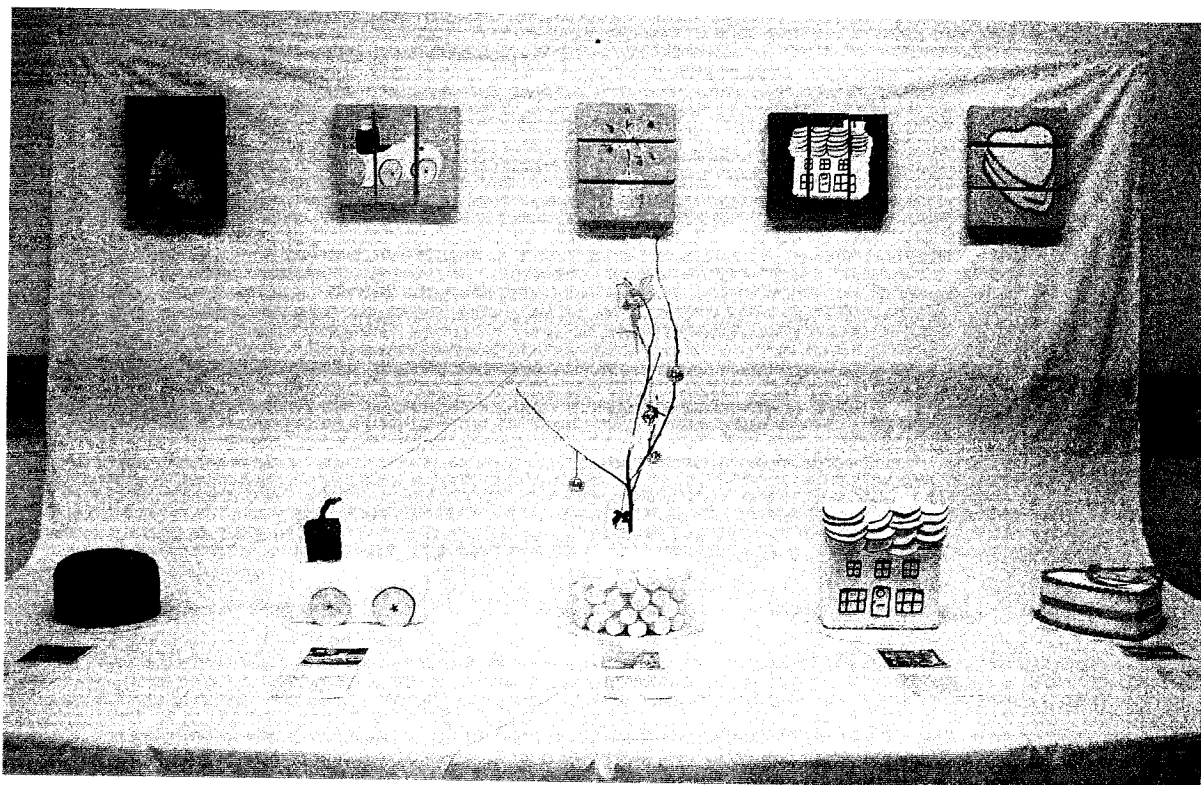


Figure 29.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Installation view, 6' x 5.5'

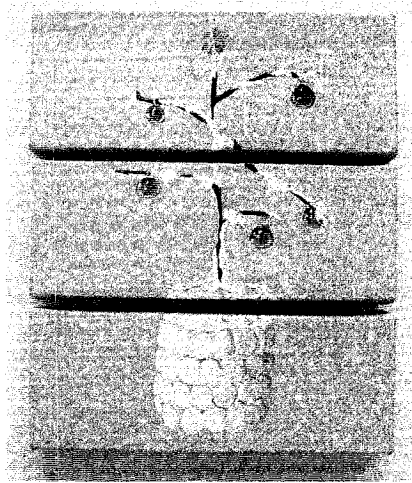


Figure 30.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail.

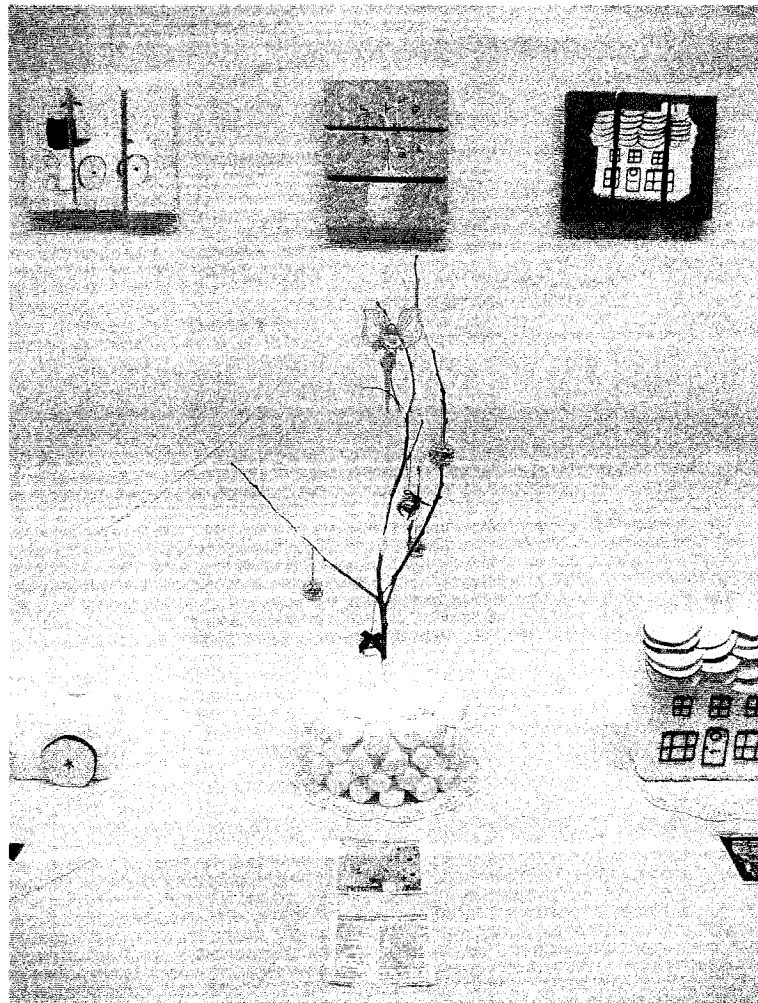


Figure 31.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail.

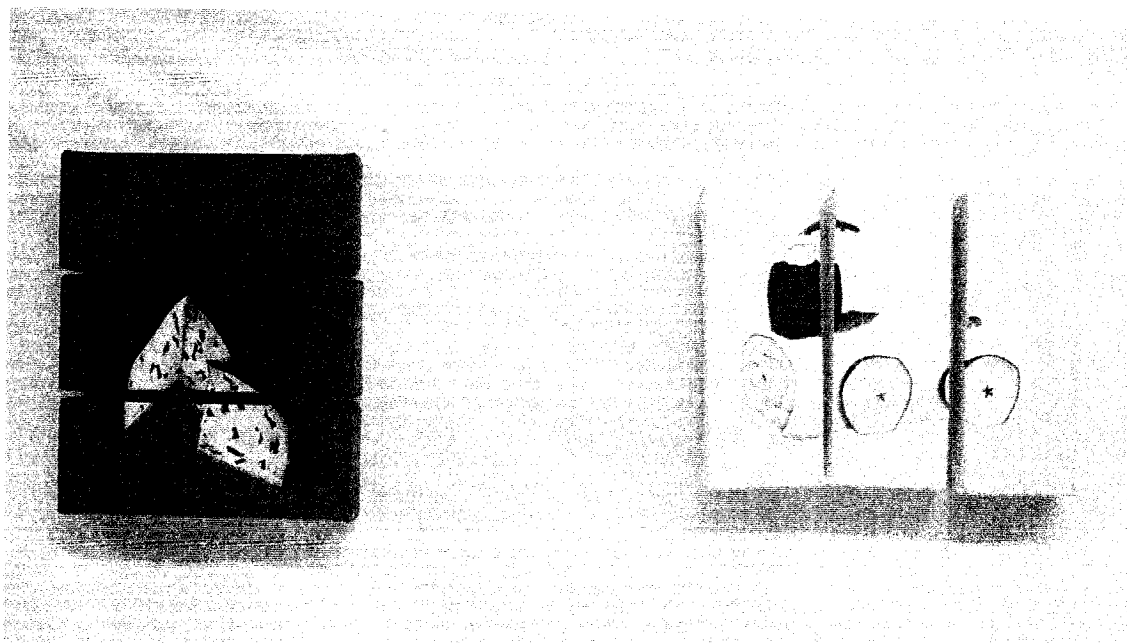


Figure 32.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail.

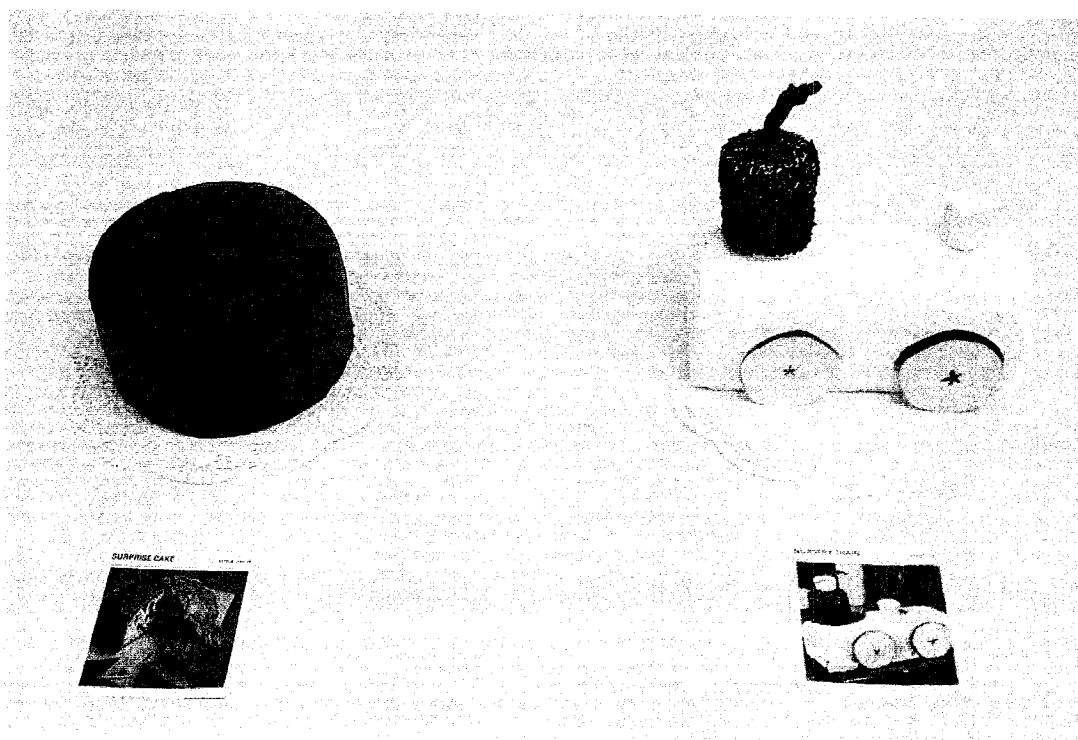


Figure 33.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail

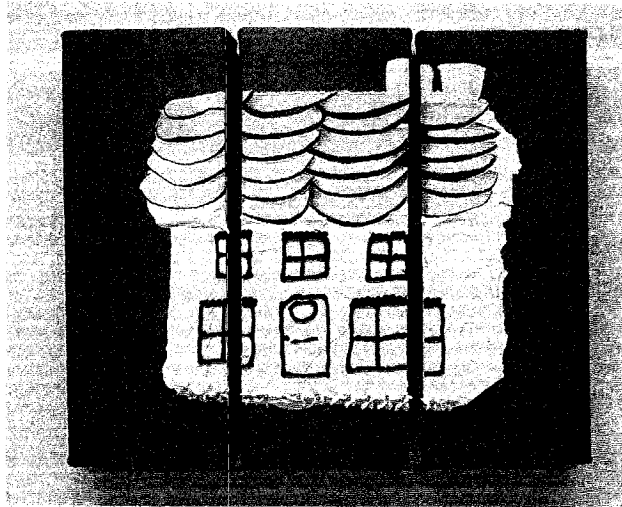


Figure 34.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail

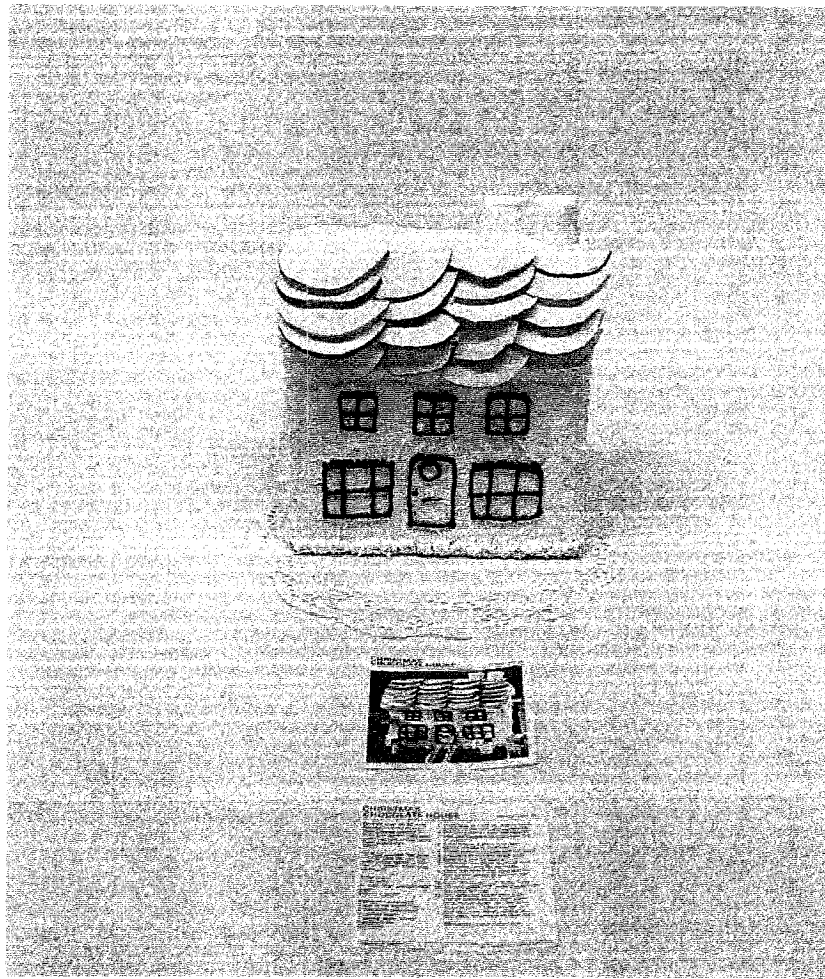


Figure 35.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail

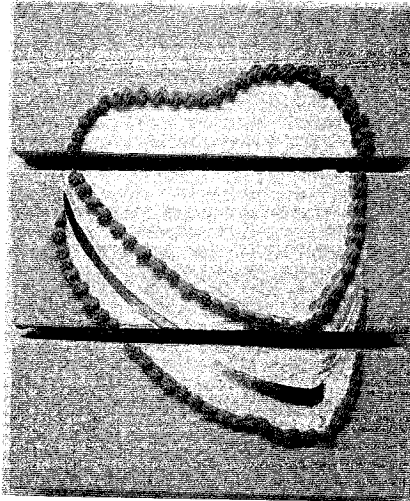


Figure 36.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail

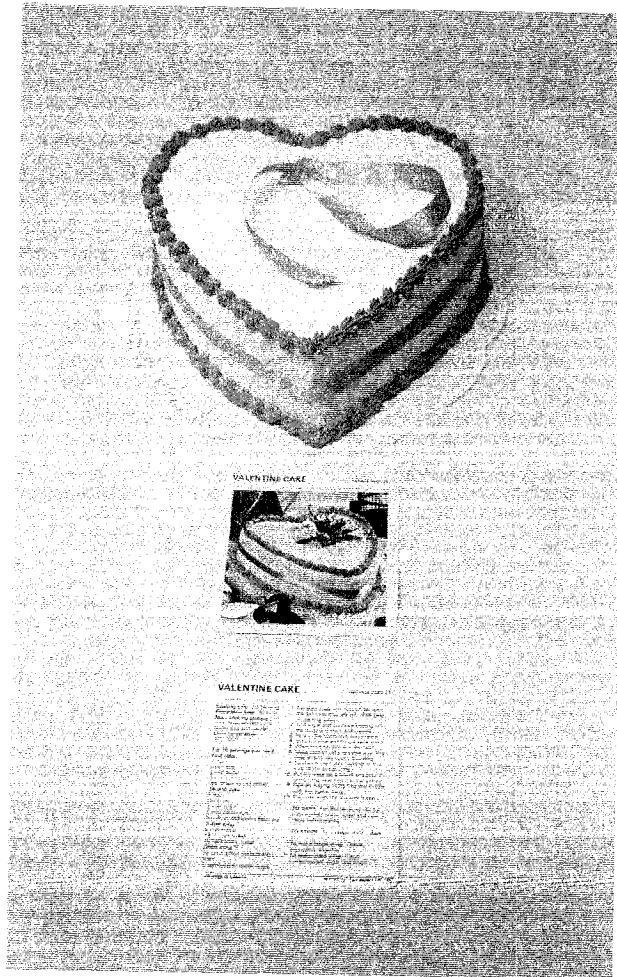


Figure 37.
Cakes my Mother Never Made (2006 – 2007). Detail

5. ICING ON THE CAKE: Implications of Research and Conclusion

Personal Practice and Pedagogical Implications

It is difficult to say exactly how the process behind my studio practice will be influenced by this study. I am certainly more conscious of the visual order that impacts my way of producing. I may experiment more with the kind of free-form thinking that the many tangents of the study led me to. Exhibiting the installations and gauging audience reactions, however has revealed new directions for my work, which will be discussed in the following section.

Figure 30. *Cakes my Mother Never Made* (2006 – 2007). Detail, 15" x 8"

Figure 31. *Cakes my Mother Never Made* (2006 – 2007). Detail, 8" x 9"

explore issues of the senses and an embodied understanding of our world? Artists working in digital technology and new media seem to be increasingly exploring issues about human interaction and simulations of the human experience²⁷. Though such creations are highly compelling, I am not ready to give up all physical traces of the artist's hand that such simulated immersions often seem to present.

In terms of my teaching practice, this study has presented me with some excellent resources and a better ability to sensitize my students to more challenging concepts of art making such as *simulation, ephemeral qualities, aesthetics, installation, and experiencing*

²⁷ For instance, in 2003 Montreal was host to an international conference entitled *Hybrid reality: Art, Technology and the Human Factor*. The proceedings were documented in an accompanying volume comprised of over 90 essays on the topics of artificial life, virtual reality in art, sites of collective memory, new modes of communication and immersion. (Thwaites, 2003).

art. In the processes of completing this inquiry, helping my students towards creating art that explores their multisensory perceptions and a more embodied understanding of their world becomes a less daunting task. I will have access not only to four installations that attempt this, but also to detailed accounts of my (the artist's) creative journey in the development of the above concepts and ideas.

It is clear that I need to be mindful of the personally important dynamics of order and visual rhythm behind my frame of reference²⁸. My students' art making should emphasize the diversity in their manifestations of the intangibility of the senses rather than *my* sense of what feels right. The problem lies in evaluation. How does one evaluate the experiential output? Along with a different approach in teaching towards sensory perceptions that do not rely on sight, new rubrics must be developed which depart from traditional modes of textual readings of works of art.

Implications for Art Education

Trends in a "sensual revolution" (Howes, 2005) could see an art education correlation in the aesthetics of the everyday. Links with the creative imagination and every day, routine experience are at the core of enriching students' daily and artistic experiences in Diaz and Barry McKean's (2004) anthology. Although most of the essays focus on sight and sound, the theory can ground the pedestrian nature of taste and smell as capable of being transformed into meaningful aesthetic experiences. Emily Brady

(2004) suggests that in order to better appreciate the everyday, one should make tasting and smelling as part of his/her aesthetic development. In the practice of the aesthetics of the everyday, Brady claims, “aesthetic sensitivity depends upon transcending the limits of visual dominance in aesthetic appreciation, and reaching beyond the limits of the wall of an art gallery”, ultimately leading to “finding more meaning” in our everyday environment (pp. 190- 191). That being said, students’ sense of aesthetic needs to come from an awareness of modes of art different from painting, drawing and sculpture. This way the students may become more comfortable in knowing how to tackle ideas surrounding the body and thereby better prepared for the challenge of channelling corporeality into works of art.

We are conditioned to ‘read’ art with our eyes, so the question now becomes how do we train our students as future art makers and audiences to receive traditionally housed (galleries and museums) art that encompasses cross-sensory modalities (or multisensory approaches) to perception? Vesna Krstich (2003) considered this in her thesis which looked specifically at visitor response to Cardiff’s participatory, multisensory installation *The Dark Pool* at the Musée d’art contemporain de Montréal. Krstich noticed that the participants were more comfortable with the listening rather than the touching aspects of Cardiff’s work. Krstich questions how much this discomfort is related to lack of background knowledge about installation and participatory art versus previous bodily experience helping to make sense of new ones. In this respect, a re-ordering of the sense hierarchy might not be so challenging. We can begin slowly, with a

²⁸ This specifically needs to come to the surface if I am to teach towards more *haptic* system of perception—a system dependant on the body’s active interaction with its environment through touch

simple inclusion of the other senses at play in a sight-oriented domain like the art classroom. By not exiling the importance of sight in perception, we can understand why and how sight has relegated the other senses to a lesser importance in perception; how and why sight and sound have dominated our classrooms and our ways of teaching the arts (teaching towards what is seen and not experienced), how our other senses are equally important in our development of an awareness of ourselves and the world around us. I am certain that bringing in scents and food into the mixture of the art classroom, at the very least, will have students intrigued.²⁹

That we have been educated to read the world as text is perhaps no more evident than in art education. The growth of visual culture has itself re-ordered how to teach art so that the haptic experiences we all evolved from are often set aside for a more symbolic and visual understanding of the world in which we live. In educational theories, the Quebec Education Plan has integrated inquiry based projects in the elementary and secondary schools. These projects have their roots in psychologist Howard Gardner's seminal work on multiple intelligences and are meant to take into account the students' differences, and enable them to "construct their knowledge in various ways" (Mill, 2002, p. 3). Gardner, however does not consider taste or smell as "capable of laying the groundwork for the acquisition of new knowledge" since they have "little special value across cultures" (Gardener, 1983, p. 61). This 'unimportance' is implicit in Madenfort (1985), who theorizes that children are most often being asked to draw what they see, not what they experience. We might then turn to the 1958 lectures of art educator Viktor

(Lowenfeld, 1982)—in art making that the senses promote.

Lowenfeld (1982), whose lectures, although not focused on taste and smell perception, considered the body's touch perceptions as fundamental to a child's artistic developmental learning. This focus on the body in art education some forty-five years ago seems to have waned and been perhaps partially hindered by intrusions of a compartmentalized arts and general education system, pointed out by Pearse (1969) in his exploration of a multi-sensory approach to teaching art.

It would seem that a lack of related projects coming from the ground level—that is, from in service art educators—is natural. Pearse's (1969) Master's thesis, *A Multi-sensory Approach to Teaching Art to Adolescents*, directly addresses taste and smell in teaching practice, yet his work seems to be the only one of its kind in over thirty-five years. I have found only two instances of a call to educators. The *Les arts du goût* web site has a mission to involve France's elementary school system, pedagogical consultants and teachers in order to educate children early about learning through the senses. (L'Institut du goût, 2002) The site offers teachers educational and cultural references to the sense of taste, promoting their mandate to educate in a cross-disciplinary manner, which includes visual art. As well, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) recently mounted an exhibition titled *Sense of the City*, where audiences were asked to consider their urban milieu through traditionally ignored aspects of their senses of touch, smell, hearing, as well as sight. In conjunction with the exhibition, the CCA offered both hands-on and guided educational workshops to school groups in order to "broaden

²⁹ One must be mindful; however that food allergies and psychological issues surrounding food and body image may arise.

students' awareness of the city, and the impact that our senses, especially those of touch, smell, and hearing have on our impressions of a place" (CCA, p. 5).

This studio-based thesis can become a resource for in-service teachers interested in having their students keep track of their creative process by example of heuristics, and/or for those with an interest in artwork that deals with sensory awareness and memory. It may also help to bridge the gap existing between a theoretical contemplation on the senses of taste and smell and their artistic and educative potential. It is this untapped potential of such inquiry into the olfactory and gustatory systems of perception that can lead to several outcomes. First, a re-evaluation of a standard definition of perception can ensue: one that admits that aesthetics can be found in every day situations and that allows for important understanding and exploration of our world beyond the visual modality. Second, the promotion of alternatives to the standard sight-oriented modality in the art classroom can further students' ideas about what art experiences are and can become.

Observations and Insights

As previously mentioned a potential obstacle occurred during the heuristic process in that I relied heavily on my sense of visual balance and seemed to let this override my intuition. Psychologist John Haworth (1997), who looks for evidence of embodiment in the work of, among others, conceptual artist Sol Lewitt, may explain my dilemma. Sol Lewitt's work is often comprised of regimented grids and patterns. As part of his description of his creative process, Lewitt states that "[f]aced with a range of

announcements, that that is where the choice lies and that is where the intuition lies, right at that moment, to intuitively choose one that feels right.” (Lewitt in Haworth, 1997, Table 1, p. 139). I understand this to mean that in creating works of art, one needs to go with what naturally makes sense to the artist. Haworth points out whatever feels right for the artist, using Merleau-Ponty’s view on perception—what we perceive is affected by our body’s active interaction with the world (Bal, 1998)—*is* occurring on a subconscious level. It is at this level that primary knowledge of the world is accessed through our bodies’ interaction with it. In other words, it would seem that my tendency towards grids and patterns was determined by the nature of my body’s interaction with my environment. Grids, patterns and order then are part of my embodied creativity. That I can acknowledge this in my work is in itself a successful outcome of my research.

Though I became aware of my strong adherence to visual order, I did not let myself deviate from the finalized plans for the construction of the installations. My stronghold on visual order may become a potential obstacle in further studio and teaching practices into the realm of the senses and experientially based artwork. I have become even more aware of it after this inquiry. It will remain difficult for me to intuit something that isn’t somehow patterned or ordered, so my visual concentration may come before the intersensory experiences I seek.

Little successes did manifest themselves throughout the inquiry, but the following are what I believe to be the most significant. First, in working out the creative output,

having an overarching theme into which to anchor taste and smell helped to keep at all of the tangents I pursued from over inflating the subject and the artwork.

An additional success revealed itself unexpectedly in my teaching practice. A student of mine wanted to use cigarette butts in one of her projects. Once she assured me that she would collect them from the street and not go out and buy a pack, I agreed to let her. Her final piece, a cigarette butt poutine³⁰ revealed a perfect example of my explorations. When she wasn't working on her piece, it was sealed in a plastic bag. When she removed the project from its bag, the smell indicated to the class and myself that she was working on her sculpture and thereby present. From a certain distance, the sculpture *looks* like poutine, but as we get closer our sense of smell reveals that what we visually perceive is not so (fig. x). The toxic scent of the cigarettes alerts us to the dangers of ingesting this product (Gibbons, 1986), which is backed by a visual reminder in the warning label in the image of the decaying teeth she used from the cigarette package. The adage *like kissing an ashtray* never rang more true after imagining my student's work as a re-presentation of a meal. Had I not been sensitized to the potential of taste and smell in art, I may not have had such a profound appreciation of its "stink". Also exciting was that I was able to explain alternatives in sensory dimension to the class and provide a bona fide sample of divergent thinking coming from one of their peers.

³⁰ A poutine is a French-Canadian concoction of french-fries, cheese curds and gravy.

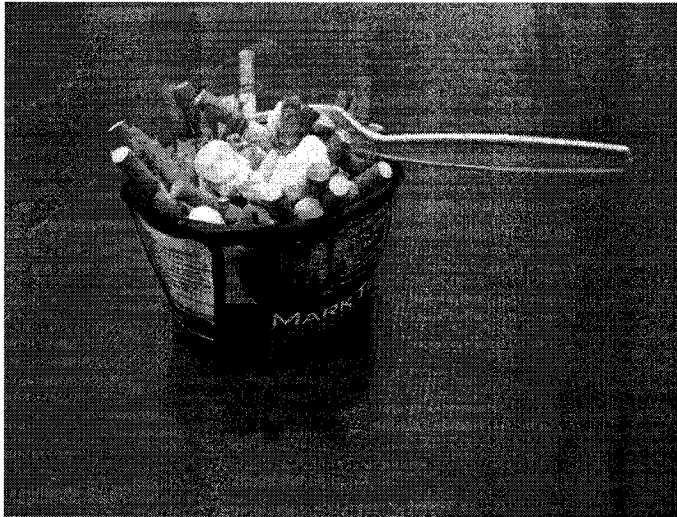


Figure 38.
(2007) *Potent Poutine*. Printed with permission of the artist.

Third, I consider the total ensemble of the installations as successful in answering my question. This relies in part to what Pinker (2002) refers to as “a new philosophy of the arts, one that is consilient with the sciences and respectful of the minds and senses of human being” (p. 417). In other words, the installations are not about what is beautiful according to antiquated canons or elitist in that only a handful of viewers will ‘get’ them; I deem them appealing to human nature.

Fourth, in presenting the work to the public upon completing the four installations, I let the “cultural commentators” engage with the work and the agency of community has made the work complete. (Sullivan 2004, p. 798). If I consider ‘art’ as being created by the artist, his/her cultural and environmental experiences and the community that receives the work, I have achieved through my work, “the capacity to create new knowledge that is culturally transformative” in two ways (Sullivan p. 800). The first is more of a socio-cultural confirmation of some of the concepts from the

theoretical explorations of this research. The intersensorial and interactive tendencies I sought from the beginning were manifested before my eyes particularly with the wall in *Scenti-metal*, and the card catalogue in *Memento*. In *Scenti-mental* I observed many visitors with their noses pressed into the holes in the wall, letting the smells linger and trying to identify the scents prior to identifying the image, then moving onto the next hole. With *Memento*, the act of opening the drawers seemed to become a child-like game, where visitors grew more and more curious and excited upon seeing, smelling and being able to taste some of their favourite candies of yore. This installation's participatory element generated over one hundred memories and responses to the dozens of different candies contained within the card catalogue. Looking back to the ideas behind the evocative powers of taste and smell, the installation is testament not only to this, but also to the early connection to feelings of joy and reward when faced with sweets. The mood of the exhibition was purposely set up to create pleasurable experiences and enjoyment, providing a space for permissible indulgences in a setting (the 'gallery') where one would traditionally not behave so excitably. Most visitors uninhibitedly *oohed* and *aahed* their way through the confections and left behind some far reaching and/or emotionally laden memories. The following are direct quotes from some of the index cards left in the drawers behind the candy.

All the candy that my mother never let me eat on Halloween in fear of the scary men putting poison in the Tootsie Rolls

I was visiting my grandmother in Cobourg, ON. We went to the local mall & I asked to go to the Bulk Barn, where I bought a huge bag of Runts. I was dreaming about eating all the strawberry & banana ones. I carried the bag in my hand all the way home, only to realize the bag had a hole in it & I lost them all...thanks for putting a new memory about Runts in this sad one's place.

My grandmother always had peppermints in her house—we always had some when we visited her—even when she was in the nursing home. I felt so sorry for her —she had to leave all her things behind but she always had peppermints.

I hadn't thought of these in maybe 20 years. But it seems like yesterday I was loading up and taking turns listening to the pop and fizzle with my sister. It's like they had this power to take over our whole brains.

In grade eight my best friend and I got married in the back stairway of school as best friends forever. We invited all our friends and exchanged Ring pops.

Every year like the lowering of the ball in Times Square...one of these would appear (except at Xmas in my brother's and my stocking)...Life was good as a kid at the end of the 70s.

When I was a kid my mother used to love this candy. She used to sit and watch "The Lone Ranger" and munch on it.

I had to take a few of these licorice candies—I'm not sure what they're really called—but they bring me right back to my Grandfather's house and his big black leather swivel chair c. 1984.

Halloween 1975-My mother outfitted me in what she thought was an awesome costume and so I was really excited: a gypsy with a black bobbed wig. She had me wrapped up in this golden yellow flowered and brown fabric that stretched and was kind of itchy; she put the left over material around my wig as a headscarf and applied makeup to complete the look. When I went over to check myself out in the mirror I burst into tears. It was way too dramatic. I looked like that actress who said "I'm ready for my closeup Mr. Demille", but with tons of blue eye shadow and a black bob. It wasn't my mom's fault. I just really hated it.

The second instance of “new knowledge that is culturally transformative” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 800) comes from the impact the research may have on future studio foci and the responsibility instilled in me as a teacher to facilitate not only new ways of thinking about art within my students, but also to have them use art as a vehicle for awareness. From the moment of *initial engagement* with my topic to insight I gleaned from the audience's reactions to and participation in the exhibition, the focus on sweets and candy led to seemingly pleasurable experiences for the visitors and myself, yet feelings of guilt emerge within me as I consider some of the more sociological and political aspects I am *not* revealing about candy and sweets. These include the slave

labour the sweet empire was built on, the food relationships formed from sweets and their corollary expectations put upon girls (sugar and spice an everything nice?) and mothers³¹, as well as relationships between candy and discipline, reward and gender roles.³²

As a final comment on the contributions to my personal success in this studio inquiry—and I am emphatic about the importance of this point in contributing to the success of any intense study—I *had a good time*. Also, the remaining possibilities mentioned above are exciting. That my topic never left me bored, I feel, is due to what is suggested by a heuristic methodology. I chose something that represented “an intense” interest so that I did not mind living and breathing my research question (Moustakas, 1990, p. 27).

³¹ As Lupton (1996) points out, “the more preparation involved, the greater the symbolic value of food as gift; the making of a packet of cake for a person’s [child’s] birthday is not as great a gift as the preparation of a complicated cake from the basic ingredients” (p. 48). This becomes more obvious when considering the *Cakes my Mother Never Made* installation.

³² A few index cards are testament to this notion: *I used to get these as a reward for ‘dictées’ in grade four. My mom used to keep a stash of red licorice. She only allowed herself one piece after she completed a task.*

Reminds me on Mr. Melnick’s barbershop in the 60s. When the gum was a prize—for boys not wiggling in the chair, and girls waiting (im) patiently.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

Stilton scent pleases cheese fans

Stilton lovers can now satisfy their cravings for their favourite brand by wearing it - as a perfume.

Eau de Stilton is being launched by the Stilton Cheese Makers Association (SCMA) in a bid to encourage people to eat more blue stilton. Only seven dairies in the world are licensed to make stilton and they are in Notts, Leics and Derbys.

The perfume, described as "fruity and earthy" by the SCMA, is now available in sample form from the association.

Star attraction

If the perfume proves to be a hit, there are plans to mass-produce the scent.

Nigel White, from the SCMA, said: "The perfume has a very earthy, musky, herby type of background which is very different to the very sweet perfumes you smell wafting down the street as someone walks past you."

Mr White added that the smell was not to everyone's taste and that there had been a mixed reaction to the perfume.

The SCMA has approached television presenter Cat Deeley to be the face of Eau de Stilton and a sample has been sent to her for her consideration.

BBC News, May 12, 2006



If the scent proves popular it could be bottled for mass production

Appendix 2.

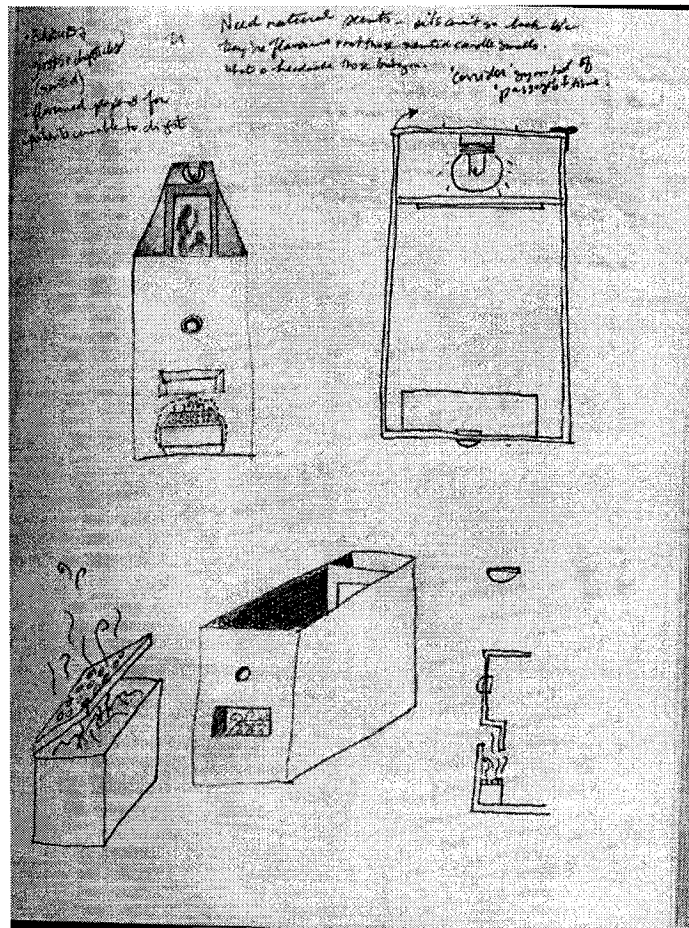


Image is out of focus - generic image (ex. small 'mint' sea out of focus landscape (green))
 viewer is forced to put the two together. The small focus viewer to make sense of the out of focus.
 Small focus viewer to create something in their own mind. Sense of curiosity & excitement. Viewer is forced to make own sense. Could use images; some not ^{easy} 'close'; some easy; some harder to 'fill in blanks'. Viewer (the smaller) has to concentrate focus to be satisfied. Scent is the cue. Viewer's now smaller first. Keep it in still images. ex of easy out of focus peppermint.

"Making Sense"

From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)

Appendix 3.

Very unhappy with 'Happy Retirement' cake. The colours for the decoration are terrible - the red is too much. The purples are much too dark and the flowers didn't turn out well. The surface of the white icing was very muddled when I attempted to fix the flowers. Unlike actual icing, acrylic is so stiff on a cake - makes it very unforgiving when you mix it in. I thought the ~~white~~ ~~icing~~ ~~was~~ ~~so~~ ~~stiff~~ ~~on~~ ~~a~~ ~~cake~~ ~~-~~ ~~makes~~ ~~it~~ ~~very~~ ~~unforgiving~~ ~~when~~ ~~you~~ ~~mix~~ ~~it~~ ~~in~~.

It looked great at first until I walked away for a few days, spent some time with a real cake and real icing and felt the immediate inadequacy of my icing texture. Too many bits or chunks of dried paint poking through. I just can't stand that purple. My practicing up the icing has been much more often and fun. I really enjoy laying on the icing though.


3) Cakes my mother never made:

- Decide on cards (which? how many?) 2-3-4? → having a hard time choosing
- Finish all papers to go into cards
- upaint upcards
- Set up? How to display the cards?
- when photos of the cards?
- write sketches (dad?)

Have sketches of 2 more + my current folding technique. I want to see how 2 or the 1st

→ 18 x 8" 8"

→ 18 x 3"

Have 3 x 

Update:

Have greatest difficulty in choosing the party in series (maybe 'O' 'U' 'M' 'A' 'R' 'C' 'E'?). Do I go for the same (more animal colors) or be one that yields

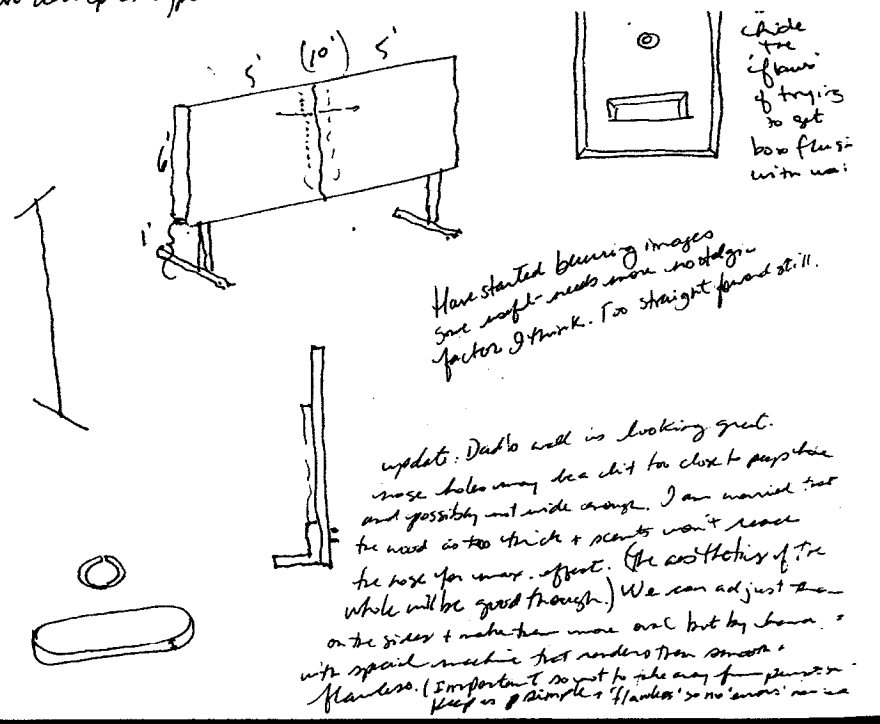
→ of the simple backgrounds of bright colors or interesting names and abbreviations? Do I want to create white backgrounds? or already done

"Happyest Tree cake"

From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)

Appendix 4.

- ② Odean memory boxes: → needs title → narrowed down to 6 w/ 8.
- enough space between
 - in same room as projection of smart's video?
 - dimly lit but not dark
 - Again, possibility of scents coming in - a problem?
 - "Refill" to maintain scents
 - All natural odours
 - foam core? → needs a plexi onto which is place photo back lit paper
 - images of ... ? Blurred to 'embrace' or make sense of the odour + photo together
 - I need a wall! -
The boxes behind.
 - give dad prototype



From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)

Appendix 5.

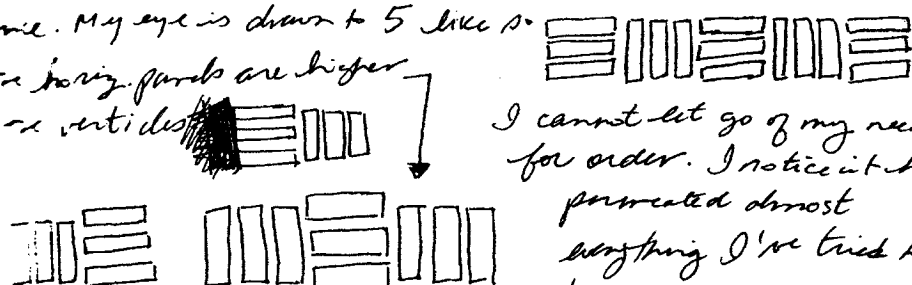
unintentionally of the co. can be
I just realized my ^{sub} conscious desire for order is blatant not in his
babbling but in the hypotheticals themselves. I just frusted saying 1, 2, 3
and ^{no} awareness + placement (just so) mattered though I just wanted to
sue from an architect. My decision to rotate the horizontal panels in
cake (I'm sorry) to fl the frame better (visual!!) will affect my 4th party
choice in that way I may be limited to only choose colors that will work
to vertically. I am so really concerned of the time about how he never will
receive this (I guess b/c it's an installation). The frosting effect is, I must
honestly admit, fantastic. I could not have asked for better. There is the quality
of the slight tint may affect the results when they're in the 'final' location
(too shiny, not shiny enough...) there is only so much I can do w/ meat + glass.

From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)

Appendix 6.

I have a strong mind that my 4th choice makes the other 3 either not
 - as funny with it or my 4th choice far too obvious - again visually.
 - the texture is what matters most so when Michelle said she wanted to
 go right up to Neuseberg cake and lick it I was thrilled. I am contemplating
 - 5th which shouldn't cut too much into time. It is a question of
 volume. My eye is drawn to 5 like 10.

as the horiz. panels are higher
 or the vert. dist.

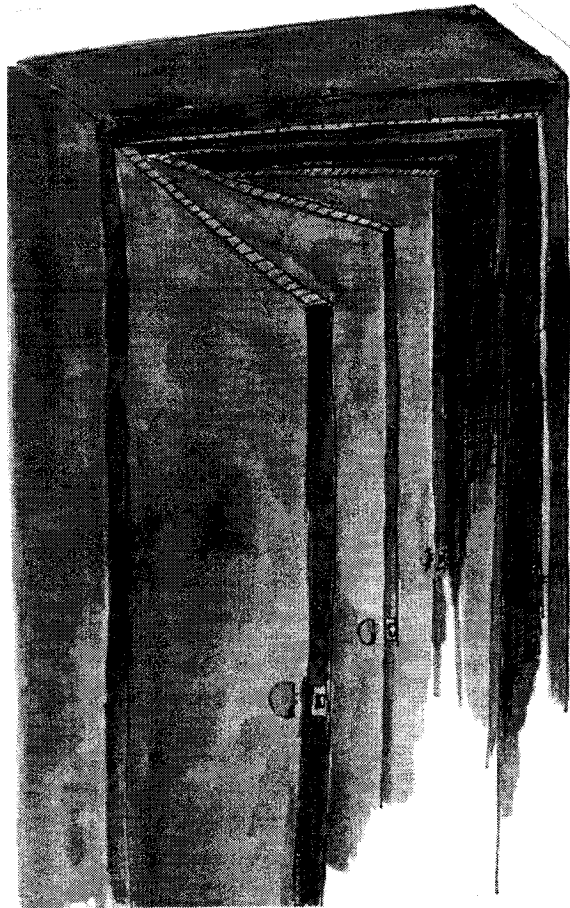


I cannot let go of my need
 for order. I notice it has
 prevented almost
 everything I've tried to
 do in terms of ideas in

this whole process as well as the final 4. I'll have to go
 back & sift through it all and pull out references to order
 that at the time were not consciously necessary ^{to have} in my final
 as a criterion. It's as if the more I am trying to explore
 the sense of T+S, the more I am understanding my own
 issue of visual perception - irony. Will this completely cloud
 my attempts at analysis of T+S? How did I not 'see' it before?

From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)

Appendix 7.



either (or both) the whole wall is covered + 3 project in larger space or each door is covered and projecting on the front side of the door is lying on other (verso) side of door like projection, you only see it if you open the door. (Too like in Wonderland?)

possibility evoking too much of a 'SURPRISE' factor. Cabinet better idea. or multiple doors throughout the room? w/ diff. projections. Too interesting? I've seen something similar in a movie recently (???)

How to integrate these beyond 'facilitator' (or door opener)?



although, relevant link to childhood? Finding Newland?

From sketchbook of Nancy Long (2006)