

importantly, they are synonymous with a desired experience. Particular scenic vistas achieve almost mythic proportions as they ultimately stand for the location they were meant to represent. They adopt the locale's "aura." Travel photography responds to the viewer's desire to take possession of a perfect scene and bring it home, as if it were a prize for collection. Thus captured in a photo album, the image proves that you have been to a specific, enviable place and have your own memories of it to share with others. All over the world, there are locations designed for taking photographs of tourist sights; with people lined up for their turn to make and take home a copy of the very same scene as everyone else. If the weather is uncooperative or the light is wrong and the "perfect shot" is not possible, for a nominal price you can buy the postcard instead.

If so much of our experience of emblematic places is mediated to the point that the "real" is barely part of the equation, is the specific place even necessary to photography, especially if only the capture of a view is paramount? What if the travel experience could be bypassed altogether, in favour of a customized recipe for enjoyment? In *Eye Candy 3*, Griffith cook ups tourist scenes out of inexpensive, readily available materials, giving them the same careful lighting and attention to detail as a food stylist or travel photographer. Does it make a difference to the sheer pleasure inherent in looking at landscape to know that if you wanted to, in this case, you could eat it afterwards? What does this opportunity for consumption say about other leisure activities, which have become synonymous with consumer activities?

Griffith's constructed images bear strong resemblance to their real counterparts, but their verisimilitude is halted by the inescapable alterations that have been made to the spaces. The waterfall in Griffith's version of *Niagara Falls, Ontario* (2003) oozes down the embankment in streams of melted processed cheese; it is an unearthly backlit electric orange spectacle. The putting green in front *Banff Springs Hotel* (2003) is much more lush than any imaginable golf course, and the branches of its pretzel trees point upward in a perfectly aligned chorus that would put any landscape architect to shame. *Hopewell Rocks, New*

Brunswick (2003), dotted with Tic-Tac© moss, stand majestically in the canned gravy low tide, dramatically lit by the picture-perfect Fruit-Rollup© sunset.

Traditionally, the landscape photograph is a representation of a natural space, yet Griffith's images document terrains that are wholly artificial and unabashedly celebrate their status as substitutes for the real place. While the "hand-made scapes" call to mind the tourist scenes that have been produced over and over again and are part of collective cultural memory; as in dreams, things here only seem familiar. The view is decipherable but not instantly recognizable, and thus retains the strangeness that prompts you to look more closely at the details you might have missed.

Eye Candy 3's altered terrain and garish colours, as well as the material components of each scene, enable Griffith to explore issues such as rampant consumerism, excessive consumption, pollution and waste. Each photograph's intense lighting and flattened sense of space mimic both travel photography and food styling, inviting a reconsideration of their complementary relationships to desire. Documenting the views of models and sets as stand-ins for well-known places, Griffith not only plays tricks on memory, but also illustrates how dramatic changes in scale operate to shift perspective on the familiar. The natural world is transformed through his lens into something palatable but ultimately unsettling, much in the same way that processed food becomes extremely distasteful if you take the time to read the label of ingredients, let alone witness its production. All the same, the consuming urge to indulge the senses in the pleasures of eye-candy is undeniable.

Johanna Mizgala, 2004

Biographies:

Johanna Mizgala is a frequent invited speaker and regular contributor to contemporary art periodicals. Her research interests include memory and identity in relationship to photography and photo-based art. At present, she is the Curator of Exhibitions for the Portrait Gallery of Canada, a project in development by Library and Archives Canada.

Gatineau artist Colwyn Griffith (b.1971) studied photography at Dawson College in Montreal (1994-96) and has a BA in Film Studies from Carleton University (1994). His Eye Candy I series was shown in exhibitions at Centre Vu in Quebec City (2002)

and The Floating Gallery in Winnipeg (2001). Griffith's work has also been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Carleton University in Ottawa, the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and Gallery 44 Centre for Contemporary Photography in Toronto. He is the recipient of grants from the Canada Council for the Arts in 2002 and 2000, and his work can be found in the collection of the City of Ottawa.

Images, left to right:
Banff Springs Hotel (2003)
Niagara Falls, Ontario (2003)
Hopewell Rocks, New Brunswick (2003)
Northern Lights (2003)

This is a Stride Gallery brochure written by Johanna Mizgala who has been chosen by the artist because of her particular interest in the project. These publications provide regular opportunities for diverse writers to publish work that furthers critical discourse about contemporary art.

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all images courtesy of the artist



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the Stride Gallery

EYE CANDY 3
COLWYN GRIFFITH
April 16 - May 15, 2004
Reception: April 16, 2004 at 8 PM



Consuming Nature: Colwyn Griffith's Eye Candy 3

*Who can take a sunrise, sprinkle it with dew
Cover it with choc'late and a miracle or two
The Candy Man, oh the Candy Man can
The Candy Man can 'cause he mixes it with love
And makes the world taste good*

— *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, 1971

Colwyn Griffith's recent photographic series entitled *Eye Candy 3* consists of thirteen large-format, facemounted chromogenic prints. Evocative of oversized picture postcards, the colours are luridly rich and almost violent in saturation. Each image features a beloved Canadian tourist destination such as Peggy's Cove or Niagara Falls, reconstructed entirely from candy and junk food. Griffith breathes new life into these vernacular scenes by reintroducing the feeling of the unexpected— the photographs are sometimes strange, the terrain not quite as expected and at times, the results are terribly funny.

If you don't have exactly what the recipe calls for when cooking, you improvise. Creativity favours substitutions. Change enables the cook to maintain the spirit of the dish, while subtly altering the mixture's flavours and textures. Disasters sometimes happen; but more often than not, daring to change the tried-and-true formula is the magic that transforms everyday fare into something spectacular. "Food styling" is the trade-term for making edibles look irresistible in magazine and advertisement layouts. The machinations behind these photo shoots are as complex as those involved in preparing a movie star for a close-up. Similarly to other kinds of food preparation, the stylist will employ "stand-ins" when the ingredients aren't just right,

or when they can't withstand prolonged exposure to the spotlights on the set. For instance, the milk that cradles every flake of cereal in the bowl isn't anything you would dare drink— it's white glue. But for the purposes of the photograph, it looks better than the real thing.

In the same way that advertising images deliberately make food more appealing through whatever means feasible; photographs in travel brochures are considered and constructed to make tourist destinations seem tempting to the imagination. Travel shots put the best possible face on a place, but most

