

The New York Times

Art in Review; Sugar Buzz

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

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An exhibition of sweets as imagery and medium
Lehman College Art Gallery
250 Bedford Park Boulevard West, at Goulden Avenue
Bedford Park, the Bronx
Through Tuesday

In its history, sugar has been the source of about as much misery as pleasure. "Sugar Buzz," organized by Susan Hoeltzel and Nina Sundell, mostly skips the health and history lessons, however, and goes right to the giddy and whimsical aspects.

Among the 28 artists in the show, several remake or pay homage to earlier art. Becca Albee's tight spiral of cakes is a playful take on Robert Smithson's famous earthwork, while Andy Yoder's licorice sculpture "Pipe" recalls Magritte. Rebecca Holland's "Crush," a line of cast sugar -- sugar poured into a mold and then crushed -- conjures up Richard Serra's early works of hurled molten lead.

Sugar is translated into textiles by Maggy Rozycki Hiltner and Vadis Turner, whose concoctions include cupcakes made with rolled-up balls of yarn and a cake made with pink curlers and cotton balls. Installations by Milton Rosa-Ortiz and Luisa Caldwell use sugar cubes and candy wrappers, while Shelley Miller paints intricate frosting textiles on buildings and then photographs them.

The patron saint of confectionary painting is Wayne Thiebaud, of course, and three artists follow in his footsteps: Tracy Miller, Lucy Fradkin and especially Sara Sill, with her diptych painting of an elaborate dessert display, "Abundance I and II."

A couple of works dip close to social politics, like Freddy Rodriguez's tribute to Sammy Sosa, who was born in the Dominican Republic, with a glass baseball bat and a heaping pile of sugar underneath; and Mary Magsamen and Stephan Hillerbrand's video that explores boundaries between couples by showing them, faces close, sharing the same chewing-gum bubble.

For the most part, "Sugar Buzz" offers pleasing candy for the eye rather than dour ruminations on sugar's complicated history or effects. MARTHA SCHWENDENER