

Flash Art

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Will Cotton at Mary Boone

By Christopher Chambers

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Will Cotton, *Crème*, 1999, oil on linen, 48 x 72 inches

"Whoa, that is so cool!" "Awesome!" People like these paintings. Indeed, "Love me," "Kiss Me," and "Hug Me" are inscribed on images of heart shaped candies that are portrayed in a large confectioner's jubilee in the main room.

If there is a grain of truth in every lie, then what might be the most overtly sardonic and cynical paintings to hang in a New York gallery recently- are actually just what they appear to be: universally appealing, photo-realistic renditions of sweet candyland. Replete with sparkles, highlights, and cast shadows, the work borrows from the seductive lighting effects of commercial product photography to fabricate a fantasy world of excess and gluttony. Sexual overtones are apparent in two paintings which feature geysers sprouting cream. The entire approach both mocks and embraces our decadent, heathen, pleasure oriented, consumption based society. Will Cotton's impressively skillful, slippery, painting technique of working from photographs of dioramas that he constructed effectively transports us into his world. The illusion of pictorial space warps in the upper half of his canvases, enveloping the viewer within a landscape with no horizon. No exit.

In *Snow*, mountains of sugar, frosted doughnuts and pretzels and "icing" are reflected in a placid, syrup lake with winter sunlight dappling the pristine scene. *Devil's Fudge Falls* depicts glittering "Oreo" cookies tumbling down a chocolate, "Willy Wonka," waterfall. The shore is littered with "Fruit Loops" cereal and stands of lollipop trees.

Cotton's new work has been likened to Wayne Thiebaud's, but it has more in common with James Rosenquist's latter efforts and even John Lenin's "tangerine trees and marmalade skies."