



ALL THE PLACES I'VE SHAGGED SNEKES NOW

HANNAH MIAMI JICKLING

COMFORT

LISS PLATT

ARTIST'S PROJECT

KRISTA BUECKING

30 JUNE 2007 - 11 AUGUST 2007

OPENING FRIDAY 29 JUNE 2007, 8:00 PM

YYZ IS OPEN UNTIL 9:00 PM ON THURSDAY 5 JULY AND THURSDAY 2 AUGUST 2007

YYZ



## COMFORT

LISS PLATT

## CONSTANT CRAVINGS

BY STEFAN ST-LAURENT

**STEFAN ST-LAURENT** is an artist and curator based in Ottawa. He is presently the Curator of Galerie SAW Gallery.

**LISS PLATT** is a media artist whose works take the form of videotapes, films, photographs, web sites, performances, and installations. Her artwork combines personal narrative, critical analysis, humour, and gender politics to explore the way various representations (popular, subcultural, artistic) inform our understanding of ourselves within the world. Platt's work has been screened and exhibited throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, at such venues as The Whitney Museum and the New Museum (New York), Akademie der Künste (Berlin), The San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Film Festival (San Francisco), The Wexner Center (Ohio), and Galerie SAW Gallery (Ottawa). She had a retrospective screening at Millennium Film Workshop (New York) in 2002 and a solo exhibition and puck painting performance at Stride Gallery (Calgary) in 2003. She has received grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Experimental Television Center, and the Ontario Arts Council. Currently an Associate Professor of Multimedia at McMaster University, she lives and works in Hamilton, ON.

When looking at Liss Platt's series of work *Comfort*, you should not be reminded of Hansel & Gretel's gingerbread house, but rather of those small rural houses made of stubby beer bottles and cheap mortar. In what could be poetically termed durational indulgence, it is staggering to witness how a heavy drinker can actually build something from the remnants of his immoderation. This unusual type of architecture exposes the excesses of its inhabitants. So why then are the vestiges of our indulgences so often relegated to diabetes and kidney failure, instead of serving as examples of spectacular growth and accumulation?

As opposed to the excessive, even expulsive, demonstration of comfort by bottle house builders, Platt's work is all about interior decorating, covering up holes inside the body no one ever gets to see. The soothing, healing power of candy is manifested through Platt's meditative grid formations – indeed, one part of the installation consists of patching together Lifesavers postcards to make a large, decorative tapestry. In this context, one cannot think of the Lifesavers brand without rehashing the urban legend of the creator's daughter choking to death on the hard candy, making it necessary to put a hole in the middle to prevent further deaths, hence its famous name. How beautiful it is to pretend a father comforted himself by devising an edible, mini personal floatation device in homage to his little departed?

Peter Halley, artist and writer, states that: «... in sixties art, images of circles began to appear. There were Noland's targets, the circular arrangements of Smithson, the ring-shaped configurations of Morris and Serra. The sixties assigned to this impetus to the circle the meaning of unity – the circle was held to be an orb, an image of completeness, a sign for unity. But the appearance of these circle motifs represented something more complex. In almost every instance, the center was empty.»<sup>1</sup>

*Comfort*, for me, is a delicate commemoration of the self – and a manifestation of desire and our perpetual quest for love. On a more pragmatic level, Platt reveals her intention: «Finding comfort in candy and finding comfort in structure do not

have the same resonance in our culture. Turning to candy for comfort implies indulgence and weakness, whereas turning to structure implies restraint, power, control. These associations, I would argue, are highly gendered.»<sup>2</sup> Still today, one can find a special edition of Men's Pocky, which asserts its chauvinism insolently on the package: «A crispy pretzel dipped in dark chocolate for the intelligent connoisseur who enjoys the finer points in life.» We are, thankfully, spared a slogan for the bestselling Strawberry Pocky: «For that dumb bitch who binges whenever she's depressed.»

Although some of the work evoke, at first glance, 1960's wallpaper patterns, influenced grandly by Modern art, specifically minimalism, pop and op art, I would argue that it is political, not formal, in essence. Manufactured modernism has had such a stronghold on the world that not even confectioners were spared its persuasion: Pez, essentially chalky, brick-shaped candy, are stacked in a dispenser usually made to look like some popular character. Morbidly, you have to pull the head back unnaturally to regurgitate the bonbon – something that made me feel very uneasy as a child.

The digestive system is a series of hollow organs joined in a long, twisting tube from the mouth to the anus.<sup>3</sup> The body empties itself out, then craves to be crammed again. This constant craving is what interests me most about Platt's work. It has nothing to do with gluttony, and all to do with being fulfilled. The chemical release when ingesting candy can be overwhelming: it affects all parts, but principally the brain.

In Liss Platt's work, we are at once confronted with ideas around the politics of food, psychoanalysis, and the steady geometricization of social space. Her holistic, personal approach to the subject of candy enables us to imagine how comfort zones come to be. It is an intricate game we all play with ourselves for momentary satisfaction. Or in Platt's case, a desire to repeat that moment over and over again resulting in the crystallization of comfort represented here.

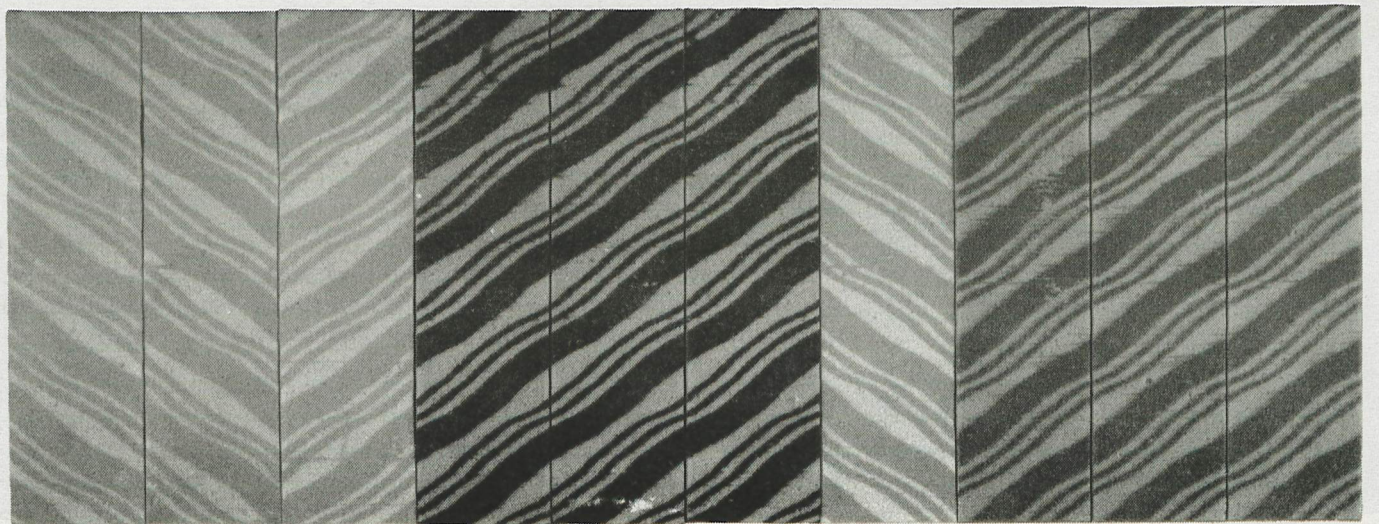
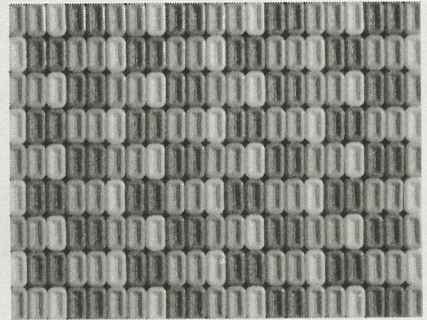
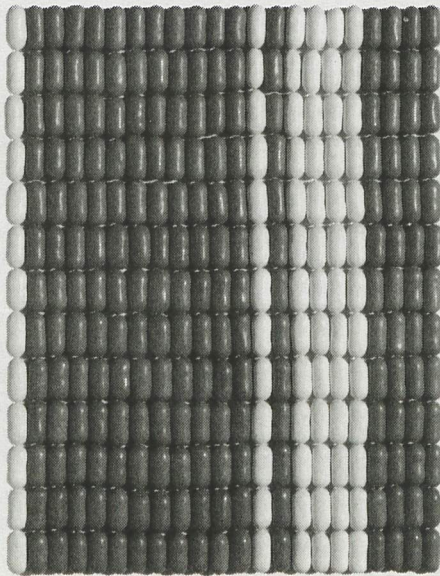
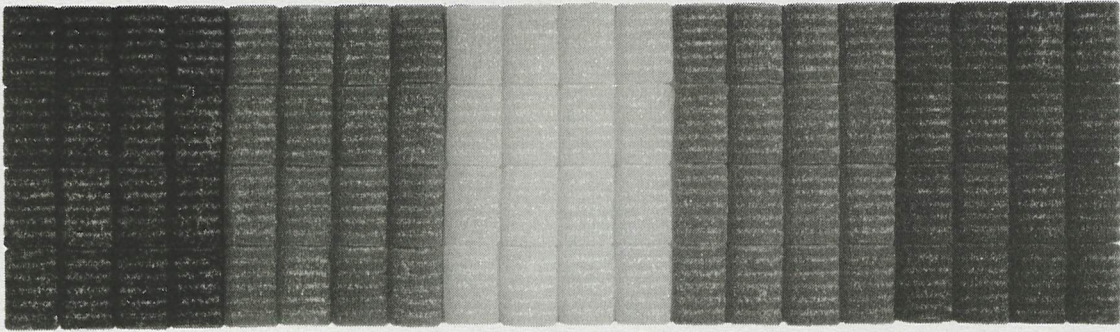
## Notes

1. Halley, Peter. «On Line,» *Blasted Allegories*, Brian Wallis, ed., (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art and MIT Press, 1987) p. 329.
2. Artist's statement, 2005.
3. National Digestive Diseases Information Clearinghouse <http://www.digestive.niddk.nih.gov/>

This project was made possible with support from: The Ontario Arts Council, The Daimon Centre for Production of New Media, Artengine and Arts Research Board, McMaster University.

Photography assistant: K. Jennifer Bedford  
Flash integration and programming: Chris McAllister





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT. LISS PLATT.

KELLY/CHUCKLES, 2004. DIGITAL PRINT, 40" X 120". COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
 PEZ COMPOSITION, 2004. DIGITAL PRINT, 44" X 52". COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
 LOUIS/FRUIT STRIPE GUM, 2005. DIGITAL PRINT, 36" X 62". COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
 NEWMAN/GOODNPLENTY, 2004. DIGITAL PRINT, 55" X 44". COURTESY OF THE ARTIST







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