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## ACTIVE LAYERS

artists working with technology

TERESA ASCENÇÃO

MICHELLE GAY

AMELIA JIMÉNEZ

LISS PLATT

VERONICA VERKLEY

TEXTS BY:

DOT TUER

MARTA MARIN

McMaster  
University  
MUSEUM OF ART



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## ACTIVE LAYERS

the artists the writing the exhibition the museum

TERESA ASCENÇÃO

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Stills  
VideoMarta's Text  
Dot's TextProject  
Description  
Artist Bio

## COMFORT

2004/05

Web-based installation  
with interactive on-line  
website,  
*MINI COMFORTS*, 2005.  
and *Ink Jet Prints*, 2004:  
*Ribbon Candy (If Noland  
Had Curves)*  
*Pez Pattern # 1*  
*Newman/Good N Plenty*

Liss Platt delves into  
personal experience as a  
point of departure. In  
*Comfort* she explores the  
apparent contradiction of  
searching for comfort in

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## ACTIVE LAYERS: DOT TUER

### *The Edible Universe (Comfort)*

Everyday the Globe and Mail newspaper devotes a whole page to health (and sickness), aimed at a demographic of wealthy, obsessive-compulsive, weight-and-looks conscious fifty-something year-olds. One day chocolate is good for you; the next red wine is de rigueur. Then it turns out grapes are preferable. Eat your oats and bran. Make sure you have MRI scans and visit cognitive therapists for the scantest sign of disorder in your life. But for god's sake don't mention that you smoke, or crave ice cream, or surreptitiously buy M Ms. The imperative to live out a regimented, prescribed, bodily-modified existence reigns supreme.

Liss Platt's Comfort flies in the face of such social strictures, separating the consumption of sweet things from bodily pleasure. An interactive installation combining large-scale photographs of candies arranged in geometric patterns and a viewer-integrated database of comfort sensations, Platt's work conjoins childhood associations of candy—a kaleidoscope of colours devoured in after-school



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### **MOUTH WIDE CHEWING**

(on *Comfort* by Liss Platt)

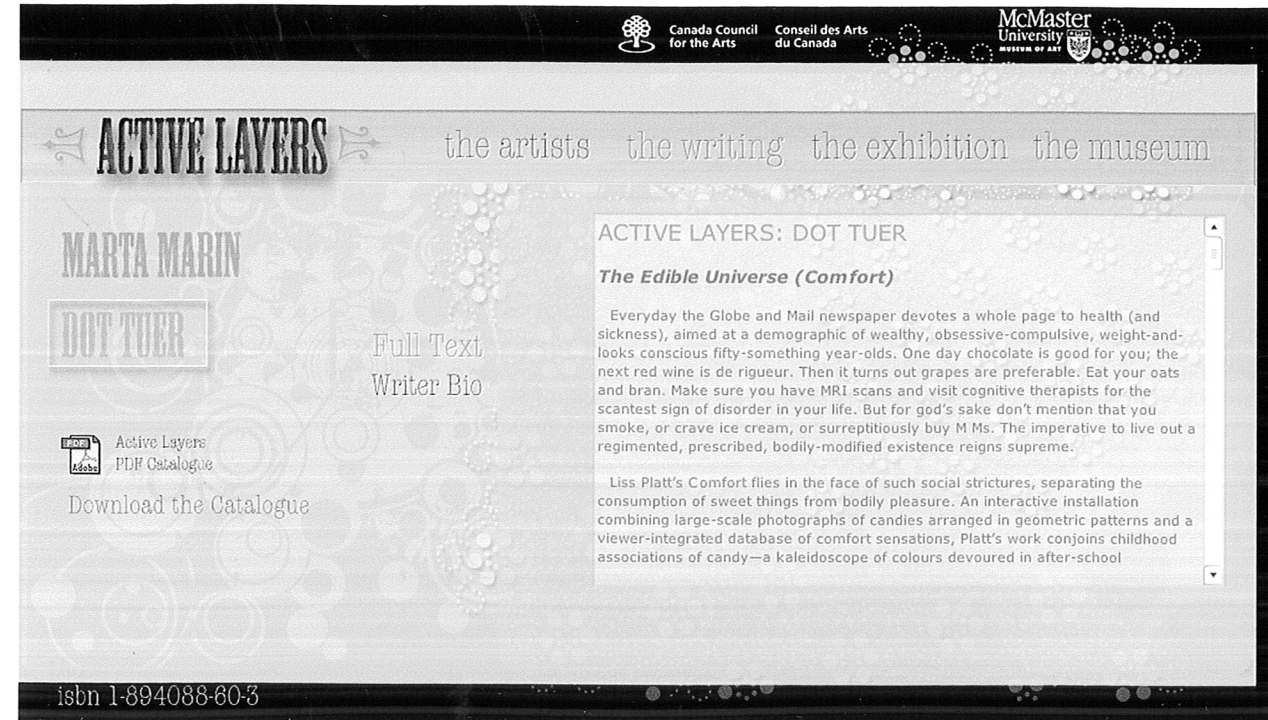
Trieb is the name Freud gave to describe the constant impulse or drive generated in the psyche toward something ill defined. Unlike the need that – at least temporarily – gets satisfied in the object (hunger in bread), the drive may be figured as a mouth wide open, permanently: no object can fulfil its demand, no bread will satisfy it. Its slogan: “more, more, more”. In order to put a limit to this chaotic-insatiable demanding, sublimation comes to our aid by creating a path towards an object which will trick the drive/demand/need into satisfaction. Sublimation thus introduces order, and therefore, a limit. It is, as it were, the stick between the jaws of the ever-open mouth. To be successful, to be capable of acting as a satisfactory tool for taming the drive, order needs to be pleasurable. Therefore, it is impulse-compulsory that I find pleasure in: Placing buttons in a box following the path of colour and shape; putting paper in drawers according to size and thickness; placing shoes in shoeboxes; gluing stamps on envelopes, opening and closing doors, painting landscapes on a canvas, building cities on a map.

Is the taming of the pulsion gendered? The notion is worth examining: military

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From the catalog for *Active Layers*, an exhibition at The McMaster Museum of Art, 2005. Catalog is available on-line and on CD-Rom.



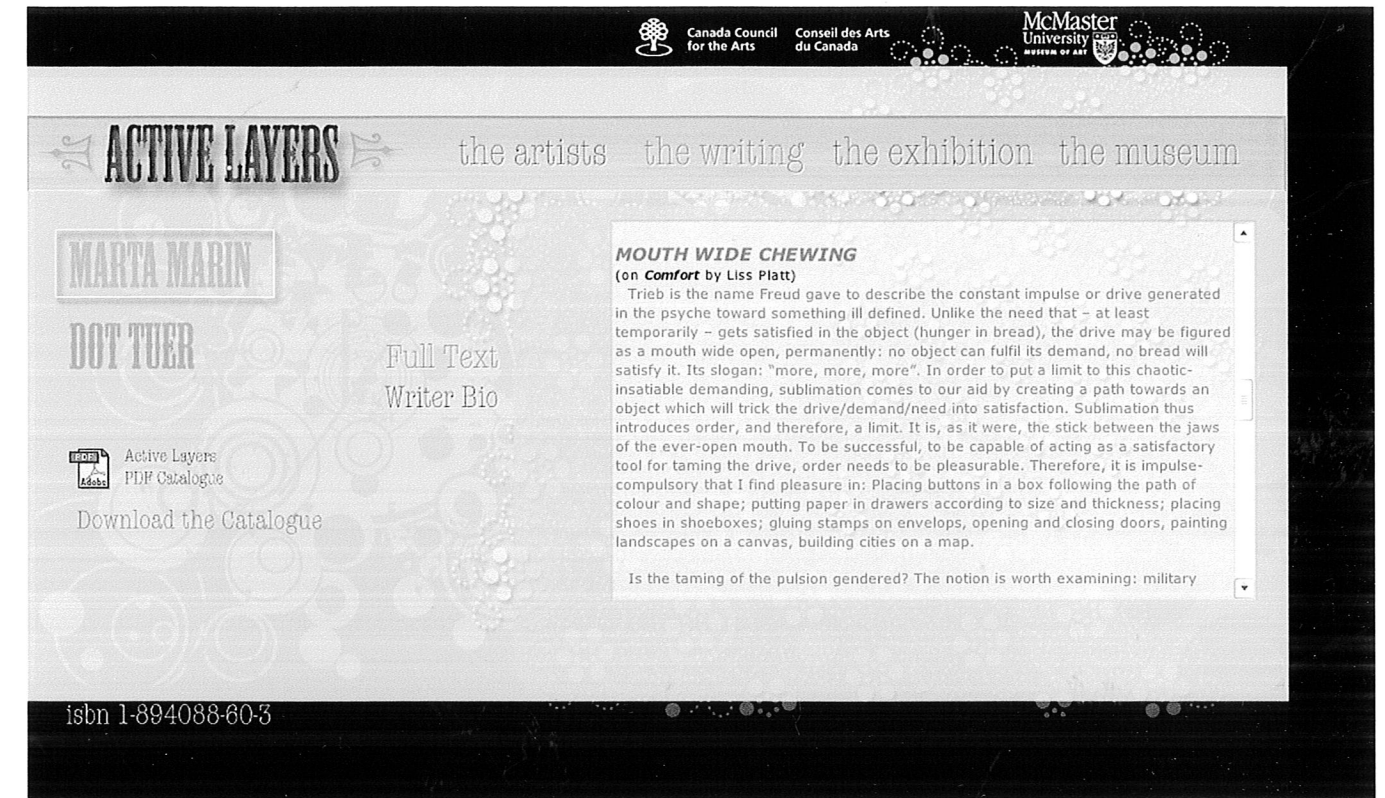
#### The Edible Universe (Comfort) – By Dot Tuer

Everyday the *Globe and Mail* newspaper devotes a whole page to health (and sickness), aimed at a demographic of wealthy, obsessive-compulsive, weight-and-looks conscious fifty-something year-olds. One day chocolate is good for you; the next red wine is *de rigueur*. Then it turns out grapes are preferable. Eat your oats and bran. Make sure you have MRI scans and visit cognitive therapists for the scantest sign of disorder in your life. But for god's sake don't mention that you smoke, or crave ice cream, or surreptitiously buy M & Ms. The imperative to live out a regimented, prescribed, bodily-modified existence reigns supreme.

Liss Platt's *Comfort* flies in the face of such social strictures, separating the consumption of sweet things from bodily pleasure. An interactive installation combining large-scale photographs of candies arranged in geometric patterns and a viewer-integrated database of comfort sensations, Platt's work conjoins childhood associations of candy – a kaleidoscope of colours devoured in after-school feasts – with digital outputs of form and function. Here, the body as the object of scrutiny is absent, freed from its imperative of conformity, and let loose amongst a riotous profusion of pinks and reds and yellows and greens. Candies, as the site of transference for the imperfect self, multiply and replicate, becoming the inverse (in relation to the healthy body) signification of visual delight.

The result of this incorporation of candy as data within a new-media paradigm is a neo-conceptual remaking of abstraction that is subtly gendered and overtly harnessed to the information-saturated postmodern age. The minimalist boys (Barnett Newman and Carl Andre) and constructivists before them (Piet Mondrian and Kasimir Malevich) sought a stripped-down, purified visual form that banished the body from the representational stage. In contrast, Platt takes candies such as Life-Savers and Smarties at their linguistic face-value, fashioning clever and animated grids that evoke the sticky residue of the body, mouth and hands stained with licorice black and crimson red. Evocations of taste in the accumulated stories of the database – the sweet taste of candy, the bad taste of indulgence – couple and decouple eating from the influencing machine of ideology. Splashes of colour neatly arranged into *bon viveur* grids invite us as viewers to strip away the prejudices of body image rather than banish the body itself, and to revel in the comfort of a candied universe.

From the catalog for *Active Layers*, an exhibition at The McMaster Museum of Art, 2005. Catalog is available on-line and on CD-Rom.



#### MOUTH WIDE CHEWING – By Marta Marin (on Comfort by Liss Platt)

Trieb is the name Freud gave to describe the constant impulse or drive generated in the psyche toward something ill defined. Unlike the need that – at least temporarily – gets satisfied in the object (hunger in bread), the drive may be figured as a mouth wide open, permanently: no object can fulfill its demand, no bread will satisfy it. Its slogan: "more, more, more." In order to put a limit to this chaotic-insatiable demanding, sublimation comes to our aid by creating a path towards an object which will trick the drive/demand/need into satisfaction. Sublimation thus introduces order, and therefore, a limit. It is, as it were, the stick between the jaws of the ever-open mouth. To be successful, to be capable of acting as a satisfactory tool for taming the drive, order needs to be pleasurable. Therefore, it is impulse-compulsory that I find pleasure in: Placing buttons in a box following the path of colour and shape; putting paper in drawers according to size and thickness; placing shoes in shoeboxes; gluing stamps on envelopes, opening and closing doors, painting landscapes on a canvas, building cities on a map.

Is the taming of the compulsion gendered? The notion is worth examining: military platoons, sports teams, stockings hanging on a line, lipstick on a counter, a woman eating bonbons from a box. Something related to the senses seems to accompany the feminine structure of the drive. Chewing, mouth wide open, ready to devour, but then surrendering to the bitterness and sourness of the drive. It seems to be this feminine structure to which the pictures are pointing: candies within a structure; candies and matrices.

The oral drive as its summit: candies for the mouth, excess mastered through the limits of the lines, one after the other, one after the other, red-blue-green-yellow-orange, colour, colour, one after the other, colour. Legions, parties, numbers, series, codes: taming the insatiable, demanding orifice called mouth.