



By Eric Weld Date: 7/19/10

Doughnuts, Yes, But So Much More

Be warned: If you're planning to view the exhibition titled "Luscious" in the Smith College Museum of Art, don't go in hungry.

The series of paintings by Emily Eveleth '83 depicts, at its most obvious, doughnuts—sweet-glazed, plump, puffy, jelly-filled pastries—the kind that explode upon the taste sensors with sugary ooze when chomped.

"Luscious," in the museum's Sacerdote Gallery through October 24, is one in a series of exhibitions titled *Table for Ten: The Art, Science and History of Food* organized by [Museums10](#), a partnership among regional museums and galleries, including the Smith College Museum of Art.

Though its subject is doughnuts, a further, closer inspection of Eveleth's luscious paintings reveals just how versatile and broad a subject these confections can be for the right artist. The hunger pangs triggered upon entering the gallery fade as other subtleties in the works emerge.

What appears as doughnuts from a distance becomes abstract—a swath of impressionistic brush strokes—close up. Eveleth's shapes meld into different forms, suggesting activity and vulnerability, wholly removed from sweet dessert. Sexuality, violence, emotion and mystery erupt from the over-sized canvases.

Entwined human bodies, for example, can be interpreted in a piece titled "After All," and a painting called "Shelter" could be a depiction of maternal protection. A work titled "Pact" features four double-decked doughnuts ganged together, crimson goo spilling from the gaping wound where jelly was inserted. "Twist" offers a large, invasive view of the jelly filling hole, to the point of discomfort—should I be staring at this?.

It's not only the range of interpretation that lends Eveleth's paintings their transcendental intrigue. Her brush strokes are lavish and, well, luscious, layered on like copious spreads of icing, gleaming with a frosted sheen in the precise museum lighting.

Eveleth's background colors, too—delicious mixtures of olive, sand, brooding purples, penetrating turquoises, the midnight-est of blues—are themselves worthy of study. These colors do not come from a tube, but are achieved through meticulous layers and combinations of primaries and supporting shades.

You leave "Luscious" not craving pastry, but having considered an array of human experience—perhaps the objective of all art, regardless of its theme or subject.

A cursory look at "Luscious" may reveal nothing more than doughnuts, and in that context this series provide s its own satisfaction—enjoyment of unhealthy cuisine without the guilt. But a longer, closer examination reveals so much more.

Georgia O'Keeffe famously turned flowers and other natural objects into fodder for suggestions of other subjects in her art. With her paintings of doughnuts, Eveleth has accomplished a similar transfer. By doing so, "Luscious" suggests the question, Can any artistic object, when treated particularly, represent aspects of the human condition?

Doughnuts can



"Questionable Ambition" (2002). Oil on canvas.



"Shift." Oil on canvas.