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Claudia Hart
More Food for Children
 2011
 Bitforms, New York



Claudia Hart
Elixir
 2011
 Bitforms, New York



Claudia Hart
RGB
 2011
 Bitforms, New York
 photo by John Berens



Claudia Hart, "Recumulations,"
 installation view, 2011, Black & White
 Gallery, New York, photo by Kurt
 Hentschlagler

Claudia Hart

A FEAST OF UNEARTHLY DELIGHTS

by Rupert Goldsworthy

The New York artist **Claudia Hart**, who teaches digital art at the Art Institute of Chicago, has made a brilliant discovery. The synthetic foods that are otherworldly commonplaces in the American diet, things like Cheetos, Maraschino cherries and Jello, have a phosphorescent kinship with the digital MacIntosh apple, a kind of cybernetic ur-fruit found across all manner of virtual platforms.

Though the artist posits this menu as "the death of food," I can't help seeing it as a 21st-century parable of a new Eden, with the digital Eve's apple and the culinary Great Satan. The palette is in the palate.

This new culinary order -- and we are what we eat -- was presented in a series of eerie color photographs in Hart's show last month at **Bitforms** in Chelsea, "When a Rose Is Not a Rose."

Hart's new Eve made an appearance in a parallel show at Black and White Gallery in Williamsburg, via a six-channel video installation titled *Recumulations*. A series of 3D digital avatars, uncolored, naked and rudimentary -- and ostensibly transgendered and multiracial -- move across an Imaginary space in an "experimental dance" inspired by a 1971 conceptual movement piece of **Trisha Brown** that was reperformed by Roberto Sifuentes, a founding member of La Pocha Nostra, a performance group.

In our cultural narrative, future-tech typically begins with promise and ends with dystopia. Hart's 15-foot tall cyborgs, dancing erratically across the gallery walls, could well be the dyads of a new *Metamorphoses*.

The final act of Hart's New York City trifecta was the banquet produced by bitforms at Third Streaming Space in Soho, where chefs Richard Noel and Ronald Jean-Gilles presented a "molecular feast" titled *Real Fake* (in lieu of a post-opening dinner). The meal consisted of a series of "molecularly altered" dishes -- elegant, delicious, barely real -- Cheetos-flavored carbonated ice-cream, lavender smoke and grapes reconstituted with dry ice. It's food for the postmodern cyborg, and that cyborg is us.

"Claudia Hart: When a Rose is Not a Rose," Oct. 25-Dec. 3, 2011, Bitforms Gallery, 529 West 20th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011

"Recumulations," Oct. 28-Nov. 27, 2011, Black and White Gallery, 483 Driggs Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211.

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