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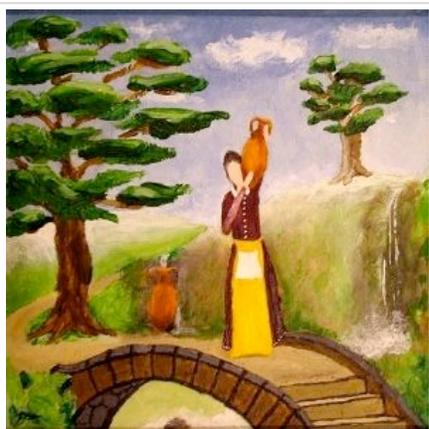
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The Chocolate – Art Equation

Editor's name: Rachel V. Olivier



Chocolate used to be considered a rarity and a refined treat from exotic, distant lands, and was limited to those who could afford it. Now, chocolate candy is just as easily purchased at the corner store as at an exclusive chocolatier's. Because chocolate may now be purchased at a relatively low price many people may not see it as the rare dessert it was once considered. Chocolatiers all over the world, however, have taken chocolate making to a higher level, creating chocolates, cakes, and other treats that could be considered works of art. Netique.com sells copies of Impressionistic paintings done in chocolate. The Food Network just recently broadcast their Chocolate Runway Challenge where pastry chefs were asked to design evening dresses created out of chocolate.

But what about "real" works of art? Paintings, sculptures, and other such endeavors?

There is a tradition for chocolatiers to paint some of their creations using, for example, colored cocoa butter, and of course coating chocolate and candies is also an art. In addition, however, there are also chocolate paintings out there – edible – as well as sculptures, clothing, games, even whole rooms made of chocolate. Not created

by chocolatiers, but by artists desiring to work in a different medium. How is this possible? Is this truly art? What inspired the artists to work in a chocolate medium?

For Sid Chidiac ([Sid Chidiac](#)), born in Sydney, Australia, art has always been his first love. After years of working in mediums such as leadlight and oil on canvas, he was inspired to paint edible portraits, beginning with an installation, called Flavor of New York, at the Sixth Annual Chocolate Show (2003) in Manhattan. His paintings were edible portraits of diverse groups of people in chocolate. Earlier this year, in April 2008, Chidiac chocolated a Ferrari for presentation at the Chocolate Art Expo (<http://www.thechocolatexpo.com/ArtExpo.htm>) that took place on the Queen Mary in Long Beach, California.

Jean Zaun ([Chocolate Artistry](#)) (formerly Wertz) is another artist who works in regular oils as well as in chocolate. She began as a candy coater in the family business (Wertz Candy) for 22 years while also pursuing her art. Eventually, she quit her day job to paint and sculpt full time. Her chosen mediums were not only oils and pastels, however, but also chocolate. Her chocolate paintings have been commissioned by many, including the Toledo Museum of Art. Yet, she not only paints in chocolate, but also sculpts, creating purses, fruit, shoes, boots, belts, and other "objets d'art".

Prudence Staite ([Food Is Art](#)) is an artist who pushes the limits of chocolate art (and chocolate art is already something that pushes the chocolate limits). Unlike Zaun and Chidiac who use color in their paintings, Staite's Bespoke Chocolate Paintings are brown and white silhouettes of famous figures from Prince Charles to Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. As with the other chocolate artists, her frames are pure, solid chocolate. In addition to these paintings, however, she also creates chocolate sculptures, again keeping it the simple brown and white. Yet, that's the only part of the sculpture that is "simple" as she creates life-size designs of people sitting at tables and eating dinner, cars, giant latte glasses, and even articles such as plates and shot glasses, and games such as chess and checkers. In addition, Staite puts together entirely edible chocolate rooms that include chocolate chandeliers, vases, fireplaces and hearths, skirting boards, and walls made out of either chocolate or sugar wall paper.

Obviously, chocolate is not content to stay tamely in its wrapper anymore. It has taken off, considered a new and exciting medium in the art world, attaining culture outside of its normal food setting. Chocolate is growing up.

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Rachel is a freelance writer, copy editor, and proofreader who attempts to cobble enough together each month to pay for rent, kitty litter, and chocolate (and maybe cat nip for the cat). Sometimes you can find her in Larchmont Village struggling to pass by the Leonida's Chocolates without going in.

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