



Wotsit all about

JAMES OSTRER

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This catalogue is designed by Hojung Kang in 2015 Spring Semester for Typography 3 class by Benjamin Shaykin.

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Hojung Kang, 2 College Street #2093, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

CONTENTS

ARTICLE	02
INTERVIEW	28
WOTSIT ALL ABOUT	38





ARTICLE

WOTSIT ALL ABOUT
7TH JULY 2014, BY BRAD FEUERHELM

"I love to eat—Kit Kats¹ or cookies²—and—cream ice cream.³ I need sugar⁴ like five times a day." —Kim Kardashian

Gazelli Art House presented the commissioned photographic works by National Portrait Gallery Curator's Choice, artist James Ostrer, from the 30th July 2014. The images, referencing icons of contemporary sugar worship, Ostrer's imagined result of a corrupted globalization and increasingly dangerous methods of food production, occupied the glass facade of the gallery and spread over the ground floor. A glimpse into a post apocalyptic world which has been destroyed by mass production, we are encouraged to question the decisions that are made for us: Wotsit all about?

James Ostrer's (England, 1979) photographs of sugar adorned subjects allude to the history of primitive art, synthetic dietary sugar intake, and an irreverent twist on the absurd in which societal practices of ingestion oscillate into a nightmarish world of abject effrontery and nutritional disillusionment.

The works are feverishly and painstakingly created tableaux with layers of sweets and food stuffs being applied to a human subject, often the artist himself, which, when staged, are photographed and patterned for reconsumption through the distribution of photographic practice. Speaking largely on the twentieth and twenty first centuries' dietary concerns and sugar's uncomfortable place within this, Ostrer's photographs conjure

1 Kit Kats There are 218 calories in one kit kats, and it contains 20g of sugars.
3 Ice Cream There are 267 calories in a cup of ice cream, and it contains 29.66g of sugars.

2 Cookies A medium size chocolate chip cookie is 132 calories, and contains 20g of sugars.
4 Sugar The average person consumes about 260 food calories per day.



EAT.

GAZELLI ART HOUSE



39 & ALBEMAR



metaphorical allegories as Ketchup⁵ flows as tears down frosted cheeks and Kit Kats' mouths bark back with menacing grimaces. This adornment becomes a mask of what we eat which then becomes entwined with a hyper-pop sensibility and an obsequious inquiry into the great volumes of sugar that flow through our bodies.

Much like Mike McCarthy's or George Condo's seminal works, the photographs form a bizarre pattern of tribalism and cartoon-like absurdity. They are rife with a sense of ritual endeavour and colour saturated sensitivity; a palpitating nostalgia for the sweets we are presented with and the potential havoc they wreak within our collective bodies.

The works become a catalogue of self-destructive behaviours, and are also managed in such a way that while transgressing themselves as odes to great works of historical art practice, they become repackaged eye candy⁶ for uncomfortable consumption. They are

5 Ketchup One table spoon of Ketchup has 19 calories, and it contains 3.7g of sugars.

6 Eye Candy There are 159 calories in one cup of miniature candy, and it contains 29g of sugars.



bittersweet to the point of decay and emphasize much of our contemporary society's needs for synthetic glucose⁷ praise, and, in doing so, proselytize the image as a new catalogue of self-harming sugar worship⁸.

James Ostrer's work often tests the limits of the body politics in the ever evolving analysis of the western body, sexuality, and society. In 2009, Ostrer staged "Customer Container"; an installation in which the artist used photographs of himself taken by six different prostitutes under which the only condition was that they order him to perform as they wished. In 2011, his portrait of Nicky Haslam in Lucien Freud's chair was chosen for the Taylor Wessing exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery. The artist lives and works in London.

7 Glucose 1 oz of glucose has 110 calories and it contains 27g of sugars.

8 Sugar worship Sugar (methylanthines) cravings can be as powerful as drug addiction cravings, with sugar being more easily available and legal.

JAMES OSTRER'S CANDIED BODIES TAKE ON OUR DIET—OBSESSED CULTURE

1 AUGUST 2014, BY EMILY NATHAN

The haunting tension between beauty and decay, nature and artifice, captured by James Ostrer's cinematic photographs can readily be traced to his first career, as a set painter for the English National Ballet. During the seven years that he toiled offstage there, devising atmospheric backdrops for the romance of the theater, the 35 year old British artist witnessed thousands of performances and rehearsals that offered him an insider's view into a ballerina's world. It wasn't until a piece of scenery "fell out of the gods," as he recalls, causing serious injury to his back, that he decided to leave the ballet and pick up a camera and although he never set foot backstage again, the enduring contradiction between the illusion of grace and the obsessive perfectionism embodied by those dancers has continued to inform his work.

In the years since, Ostrer has gained an international reputation for the raw, disconcerting brutality of his photographs, which depict rigorously honed, disciplined bodies in uncomfortable spatial relationships with accessories of their contemporary existence, and earned him the National Gallery's London-Taylor Wessing Portrait Prize in 2010. This exhibition, on view at Gazelli Art House, is anchored by a suite of works that Ostrer was commissioned to create in 2014, as the National Portrait Gallery Curator's Choice.

Collectively titled "Wotsit⁹ All About," they feature human subjects plastered in coats of sugary comestibles,¹⁰

9 Wotsit Wotsits are the British version of Cheetos. It is 90 calories per bag and contains 1.5g of sugars.

10 Comestibles Comestibles is the large amount of sugar that food companies add to their products.

from commercial cake¹¹ batter and cupcakes¹² to sour straws¹³ and gummy eggs.¹⁴ Pictured from the waist up, seated and facing the camera against vibrant, solid color backgrounds, the subjects of each image concurrently pay homage to and parody the history of portraiture, traditionally used to celebrate and immortalize an individual. Ostrer's models, ironically, exist as faceless poster children for a diet-obsessed society, even while they are treated formally with the exaltation of a royal.

Wax-lip mouths agape, candy-shaped eyes bulging from crusty green and pink flesh, heads distorted by donuts to resemble African masks crowned by tribal adornments, the figures are unrecognizable as living people, so thoroughly have they been transformed into gruesomely frosted figurines. The show's title operates as a clarion call for reflection: it suggests the fraught reality of a globalized world in which the feverish dissemination of mass-produced, synthetic materials increasingly dominates cultural exchange.

11 Cake A piece of Chocolate Cake(with Chocolate Frosting) has 240 calories.

13 Sour Straw There are 140 calories in a pack of Sour Straws, and it contains 15g of sugars.

12 Cupcake One cupcake is 178 calories, and it contains 26g of sugars.

14 Gummy Eggs 1lb bag of Gummy Eggs has 130 calories, and it contains 21g of sugars.

PEOPLE COVERED IN SWEETS BY JAMES OSTRER

2 AUGUST 2014, BY TABISH KHAN

Obesity¹⁵ is on the rise and it's largely down to poor diets. Artist James Ostrer confronts this issue head on with his bright and sugary photographs. His models are covered in sugary sweets and snacks to form grotesque totems each with their own junk food theme ranging from ice cream through to hot dogs,¹⁶ from head shots to entire families posed encrusted with sugar. The nudity, enlarged genitalia and onanism present in his photographs reference the heightened fetishisation of food and the sensuality often used in advertising to sell unhealthy foods. One sculpture resembling Mickey Mouse also links in to other parts of consumer culture where branding is just as strong. But Ostrer's strongest parallels are with religion. Most of his grotesque creations resemble primitive masks and sculptures associated with tribal religions. The strength of fast food brands has converted them into pseudo-temples, where desires can be realised. Ostrer's works are undoubtedly creative and eye-catching, and the piece at the front of the gallery across two floors means the show is hard to miss. Our difficulty with the works is that the hyper saturated colours give the pieces a certain pop art kitsch, which in itself is not a bad thing, but this instant visual appeal does mean the underlying message around the perils of junk food culture is diluted.

15 Obesity More than two in three adults are considered to be overweight or obese.

16 Hot Dogs There are 151 calories in a hot dog and it contains 567mg of sodium.



ALL SWEETNESS BUT NOT LIGHT

2ND AUGUST 2014, BY CHARLOTTE CRIPPS

While we are throwing away bottles of pop and avoiding hidden sugars in the quest to tackle the obesity crisis, others are using art to deal with their rampant sweet issues. The photographer James Ostrer, a self-confessed sugar addict, has covered his subjects, including himself, in layers of sweets, buns,¹⁷ crisps,¹⁸ chocolate and cakes for his latest photographic study, Wotsit All About?

He starts by mixing cream cheese¹⁹ with artificial colouring, which he then smears over his subjects, before adding the junk food. A full body can take up to one hour to finish, the face only about 30 minutes. He has to plan ahead meticulously, making the adornments in advance, because there is only a certain amount of time the food will stay looking perfect before it falls off the subject or, if it's ice cream, melts. "I wanted to engulf myself in sugary foods hoping that by doing this, I wouldn't be attracted to them anymore," says Ostrer. "I thought the project would cure me. It did create a sense of detachment between me and the item as a consumable, but now that the show is hung, I have removed the vast boxes of junk food from my studio, so that I don't binge."

His photographs include a model covered in endless hundred and thousands. In one photograph a man has chips²⁰ as hair, a burger²¹ as amouth with tomato ketchup dips for eyes and a chicken nugget²² as a nose. A tribal theme runs through the photographs. "I wanted to redefine the human species in modern tribes based on

17 Buns Bun is a Hamburger or Hotdog Roll which has about 120 calories.

19 Cheese A small package of Cream Cheese has 291 calories, and 273mg of sodium.

18 Crisps A bag of sweet crisps has 90 calories, and it contains 6g of sugars.

20 Chips There are 1217 calories in a bag of potato chips, and it contains 2894mg of potassium.

what they eat.” Ostrer studied at the Royal College of Art, before becoming a set designer at the English National Ballet. After some scenery fell on him causing a back injury, he turned to photography. His portrait of interior designer Nicky Haslam sitting in Lucien Freud’s chair hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. Most of his work is “self-help therapy”, though, focusing on addiction and family.

Of his latest body of work, he says: “Instead of wanting to create something that makes you feel down in 20 minutes, like sugar, I wanted to create something beautiful that lasts forever.”

21 Burger One burger has 354 calories. It contains 497mg of Sodium and 5g of sugars.

22 Chicken Nugget 6 pieces of Chicken Nuggets are 287 calories, and it contains 583mg of sodium.

CANDY CRUSH: THE ARTWORKS THAT LOOK LIKE SWEETSHOP NIGHTMARES

3RD AUGUST 2014, BY AMY FLEMING

With its doughnut²³ eyes, meringue mouths and hair, James Ostrer’s edible art may be the stuff of night-mares, but it has also helped him kick his junk food addiction.

James Ostrer’s affair with junk food began in earnest after his parents divorced. Every weekend his father would collect the children (he was often late; it was a tense handover) and take them to McDonald’s,²⁴ which Ostrer came to view as “a place of relaxation and fun”. Ever since, he says, “when I feel distressed, I will go straight for this kind of food.” Which, in a roundabout sort of way, is why he has spent at least £5,000 in the last two years on Mars bars,²⁵ Jelly Babies,²⁶ strawberry bootlaces²⁷ and other sweets and crisps.

This vast stash was not for eating, but to be used in human sculptures through which Ostrer would explore his relationship with junk food, and perhaps even rid himself of his addiction. He and others were caked in cream cheese that had been dyed lurid colours, inlaid with, as Ostrer puts it, “scientifically produced items developed to attract us without any nutritional value”.

The photographs in which the artist documented this exercise are by turns grotesque, hilarious and tragic. They are the childhood dream of the gingerbread²⁸ house—a world spun from sugar—turned nightmare. And appearing, as they are, in the same year in which the notion of sugar addiction has been widely accepted into the public consciousness and been blamed outright for

23 Doughnut One medium size of doughnut has 195 calories and 11g of sugars.

25 Mars Bars One Mars Bar has 120 calories and, it contains 6g of sugars.

24 Mcdonald's Mcdonald's one of the best menus, Big Mac has 530 calories and 960mg of sodium.

26 Jelly Babies A bag of Jelly Babies has 310 calories, and it contains 20mg of sodium.

the obesity epidemic, it is hard not to see in them an element of harsh truth. Some of the caricatures that Ostrer has created, with their bulging gelatin eyes and misshapen heads, have an alien quality. Others use generic tribal imagery in a reference to ancient hunter-gatherers who, he imagines, had to endure multiple bee stings to score some honey. Now, he says, “you just have to stick your hand out and grab a whole pile of things from the checkout. It’s not special any more.”

There are echoes, too, of Jake and Dinos Chapman’s Family Collection, which featured African-style carvings incorporating McDonald’s logos and emblems. “Fifty per cent of the time,” says Ostrer, “you feel fucking awful about what we do to the world, how we get our T-shirts and food so cheap, and then the other half is: ‘Yeah, I’m having a great time, look at me under the blue sky driving a nice car.’”

Along with the black humour, and monstrous quality of many of these sugar zombies, some, with their ornate headdresses and plinths, are intended to reflect the way that the young Ostrer worshipped marketing mascots such as Tony the Tiger. While immersed in this project, he says, “I’ve had dreams where these caricatures are telling me how I should live. To me they look like... this sounds a bit harsh, but if someone had poured acid over Tony the Tiger. It’s like they are melting.” In Ostrer’s short film showing the making of one of the images, slathering

27 Bootlaces 100g of strawberry laces has 370 calories, and contains 52g of sugars.

28 Gingerbread A piece of gingerbread has 264 calories and it contains 26g of sugars.



people in gloop and chucking sugar sprinkles²⁹ all over them looks a right laugh, like messy play for big people. But while the process was “intensely fun”, it was also therapy³⁰ for all involved. “I’m the therapist and the client in all my work.” There is a ceremonial quality to the process, he says, which is as important as the final image.

The whole thing looks less fun for the sitters, who must wear goggles under their fake eyes, and are temporarily rendered blind, dumb and paralysed, and sometimes have only a single nostril to breathe out of during the photo shoot. “Some people can sit there like a monk for a century,” he observes, “and then you ask someone very dynamic and together to stand still for 10 minutes and they’ll freak out. That in itself is very interesting for me and them. Emotionally, things come out from people.”

One sitter, who works for the secret service in war zones, said after the shoot that he had “never felt so in touch with himself, because when you’re covered your eyes, your ears—you’re there in the moment, you feel how you feel, you have to connect with yourself.” Ostrer says he felt the same when he did it. “It creates a space

29 Sprinkles A teaspoon of Rainbow Sprinkles has 40 calories, and it contains 4g of sugars.

30 Therapy Includes cutting down on “junk food” and replace it with a balanced diet rich in oily fish, fruit and



of meditation³¹ in a way.” Making these images also reminded him of the painful events that ended his painting career. After training at Chelsea College of Art, he spent seven years painting sets at the English National Ballet; then a piece of falling scenery landed on his head and damaged his spinal cord.

“I spent months trying to eat my way to happiness,” he says, “and actually, all I needed to do was get up and go for a walk.” He never picked up a paintbrush again.

Another of Ostrer’s sitters asked him to use a type of sweet that she’d once had an extremely negative relationship with. After the shoot she went home and wept for an hour. “Engulfed in the smell of those sweets,” Ostrer explains, “she realised how much she’d moved forward.”

His own junk-food addiction³² isn’t entirely cured. While handling bin bags full of Wotsits and unwrapping hundreds of Mars bars did create some “emotional detachment” from the products, he says, “you do think: ‘Ooh, I really fancy one of those—I’ll give it a go.’ And then you eat a few and feel sick again, in the same way that everyone does. But I feel like I’m definitely ready to give up now.”

31 Meditation It releases the mental hold of addiction and help as a treatment for addiction.

32 Addiction Junk food addiction, like drug addiction, affects the reward center in your brain.

WOTSIT ALL ABOUT?

5 AUGUST 2014

A timely creative spin on our sugar obsession by artist James Ostrer whose photographs feature human subjects covered in confectionery.³³

A self-confessed sugar addict, artist James Ostrer presents a new photographic exhibition, Wotistallabout? at Gazelli House. Tony the Tiger being banned from the Kellogg's³⁴ Frosties ads back in 2009 sparked his interest in sugar as a creative subject matter and with the recent media frenzy over the evils of the sweet stuff, the show couldn't be more timely. Ostrer covered his subjects (often himself) in layers of confectionery—buying convenience food in bulk, transporting it to his studio and organising ranks of sweets and pastries as an artist might his palette. The resulting photographs call to mind the work of the late Leigh Bowery and their tribal nature harks back to a time when the taste of sugar would have been a rarity as opposed to a daily over indulgence.

33 Confectionary One biscuit has 357 calories and it contains 2.2g of sugars.

34 Kellogg A cup of Kellogg has 100 calories, and it contains 3g of sugars.



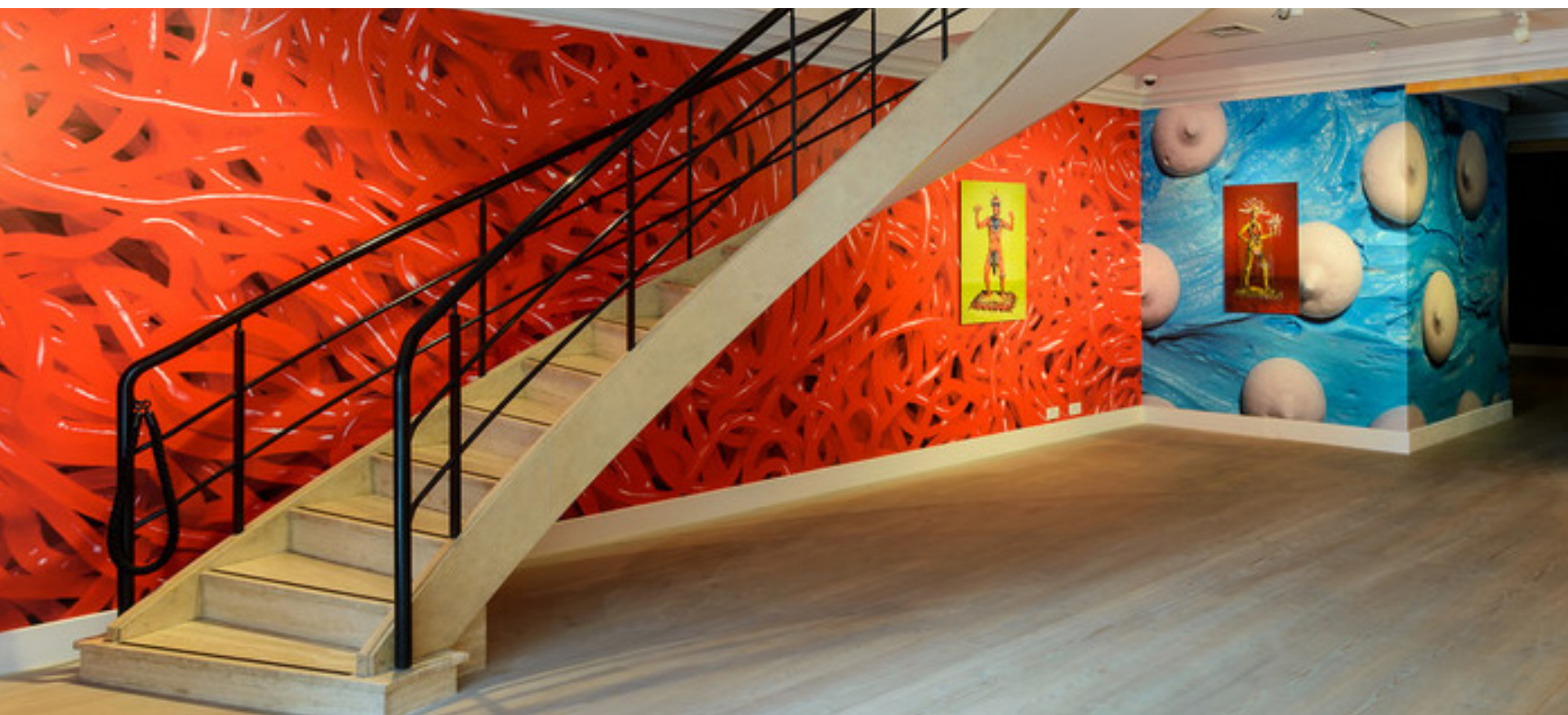
KITCHEN NIGHTMARES!

14 AUGUST 2014 WRITTEN BY KATY WINTER

An artist has slammed junk food culture by creating disturbing portraits of models covered in unhealthy fast food³⁵ such as burgers, chips and ketchup.

Some of James Ostrer's pictures—in which his subjects wear frankfurter devil horns, have Wotsits for hair and liquorice³⁶ bootlaces in place of a tongue—resemble one of Willy Wonka's³⁷ most terrifying nightmares.

In others, the 35-year-old smears his models' faces with ketchup tears and uses burgers, chips and sausages³⁸ for facial features. James made the monstrosities to show the rampant consumption of junk food and how it



35 Fast Food Burger King Triple Whopper Large Meal has 2100 calories, 104g of fat and 2270mg of sodium.

36 Liquorice 15 pieces of Liquorice has 135 calories, and it contains 19g of sugars.

affects our moods. James' own relationship with junk food stems from his parents' divorce and his dad taking him to McDonalds at the weekend.

The artist said, "I came to view it as a place of relaxation and fun. Ever since whenever I feel distressed, I go straight for this kind of food."

James spent £5,000 over two years building up his hoard of Mars Bars, Jelly Babies, crisps and sweets to make his art. His models have to spend hours sat still, wearing goggles over their eyes and in some cases breathing through only one nostril until they're completed.



37 Willy Wonka A small package of Cream Cheese has 291 calories, and 273mg of sodium.

38 Sausages There are 229 calories in one sausage and 644mg of sodium.

JUNK FOOD MASKS REVEAL THE NIGHTMARISH DEPTHS OF SUGAR ADDICTION

25 AUGUST 2014, WRITTEN BY PRISCILLA FRANK

In case, for some odd reason, you have ever had the urge to smear frosting and other delicious junk foods all over your face, we kindly ask you to refrain. The results are just too terrifying. It's "Lord of the Flies" with baked goods. Total delicious anarchy.

Today we're stuck ogling the bewitching junk food masks of British artist James Ostrer. The high calorie³⁹ creations, landing somewhere between an ancient ritual mask and a midnight snack,⁴⁰ are simultaneously delicious and dangerous. The uncanny folk art, despite its alluring intensity, looks far too bright to actually go inside your body, yielding an unexpected portrait of sugar's dark side.

"I started with wanting to create new tribes based on what we now eat and how far removed it is from nature," Ostrer explained to The Huffington Post. "The distance between what comes out of the ground and what we then open from a packet."

"Like most of my work It very quickly became a self-help experiment where I am as much the therapist as I am the client. The specific intent was to expose myself to such extreme levels of sugar and junk food that I would no longer want to eat it again.

"Like most of my work It very quickly became a self-help experiment where I am as much the therapist as I am the client. The specific intent was to expose myself to such extreme levels of sugar and junk food that I would

39 High Calorie Pizza Hut's cheeseburger crust pizza is 288 calories a slice, or 2,880 for the whole thing.

40 Snack Worst midnight snack is Cap'n crunch, which has 147 Calories and 16g of sugars.

no longer want to eat it again. I hoped to change my response to the mass of synthetic⁴¹ and saturated color in shops, that hums and draws me in like a fly to a zapper. I wanted to convert those feelings into something new and beautiful.”

Indeed, the vibrant oranges of Cheetos⁴² and deep reds of licorice sticks do make stunning artistic materials. But this unexpected neon radiance makes us far more hesitant to actually consume them. Ostrer’s artworks take a non-pedantic approach to the dangers of sugar, using their attractive aesthetics to hint at their repulsive realities. According to New York Magazine, the supplies cost James Ostrer \$8,000.

“In a wider context I see it as an anthropological reflection of our slavery to sugar addiction and the techniques used to get us there,” the artist said. “Great advertising and packaging pulls you in with all these promises of beauty, happiness and joy then your left feeling empty and disturbed by wanting something different than yourself. I aimed to achieve this oscillation between beauty and ugliness in the works.”

41 Synthetic Most artificially colored foods are colored with synthetic chemicals that do not occur in nature.

42 Cheetos

A package of Cheetos has 200 calories and, it contains 350 sodium.

JAMES OSTRER'S JUNK FOOD MONSTERS

26 AUGUST 2014, JUXTAPOZ

James Oster's *Wotsit All About* are the imagined result of corrupted globalization and increasingly dangerous methods of food production.⁴³ A glimpse into a post apocalyptic world which has been destroyed by mass production,⁴⁴ he encourages us to question the decisions that are made for us: *Wotsit all about? We are asking ourselves, "When can I have some cake?"*

The works are feverishly and painstakingly created tableaux with layers of sweets and foodstuffs being applied to a human subject, often the artist himself, which, when staged, are photographed and patterned for reconsumption through the distribution of photographic practice. Speaking largely on the twentieth and twenty first centuries' dietary concerns and sugar's uncomfortable place within this, Ostrer's photographs conjure metaphorical allegories as Ketchup flows as tears down frosted cheeks and Kit Kats' mouths bark back with menacing grimaces. This adornment becomes a mask of what we eat which then becomes entwined with a hyper pop sensibility and an obsequious inquiry into the great volumes of sugar that flow through our bodies.

43 Food Production Modern food production techniques threaten human health and the environment.

44 Mass Production Mass product manufacturing practices are including more and more harmful chemicals in food.







INTERVIEW

INTERVIEW: JAMES O. BY TONI GALLAGHER

1 AUGUST 2014, BY TONI GALLAGHER

I was fortunate enough this week to take a stroll on the Heath with the Artist James Ostrer, prior to his solo show which opened at Gazelli Art House on the 31st July. The idea of doubling up an interview with a dog walk seemed like a good plan, one lost dog and two and a half hours later we did manage to get in a good chat.

The charming, funny and perceptive Ostrer turned his back on scenic painting for the Royal National Ballet eight years ago after a life changing accident at work. This turn of events put a camera firmly in James hand, propelling his career as an artist. I wanted to know more about what drives this fiercely creative soul, at the same time hoping he would let slip the secret of where he buys his cream cheese.

IF YOU WEREN'T AN ARTIST, WHAT WOULD YOU BE?

Probably dead as making my work has acted as a kind of shamanic self help therapy to expel my deepest demons....But if I had to give up being an artist tomorrow and had the money and brain power I would go to University and study to be a surgeon..

WHO OR WHAT MAKES YOU LAUGH?

My mum's hand made cards she sends me....My best mate when we go for a kebab together.... My dog's crazy movements when he is having dreams...

WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE YOU FACED IN YOUR CAREER?

None I would complain about but I can get a bit stressed out at the point where I move from simply conceptualising and making the work to acknowledging that people are going to see it. I suppose in the early days the main challenge was with my fear of validation and a complex relationship with wanting to attract attention and not wanting it, this is a dichotomy I still have.

HOW DO YOU START THE PROCESS OF MAKING ART WORK?

Totally depends which project.....It can range from collecting dozens of mattresses off the street, taking my whole family to a morgue to photograph them on a slab, going to brothels to get my picture taken by prostitutes, convincing friends to do things they never thought they would, finding people I haven't seen for 20 years and interviewing them or burying myself in vast quantities of food....

DO YOU CONSIDER THE VIEWER WHEN MAKING YOUR WORK?

Sometimes especially when the reaction between the viewer and the artwork is part of the work itself. "The Journey" installation I was involved in was about Human trafficking had 2,500 people a day walk through several

cojoined shipping containers often very quickly. It was necessary for me to get a complex dialogue about prostitution and the people that go to them in as little as ten seconds with a multiple sensory experience. This project required a huge amount of research around human behaviour.

CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT YOUR WORK
AND THE MAIN IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS?

My latest show “Wotsit All About” at the Gazelli Art House is all about my personal relationship with sugar addiction and the issues at large with the human race’s desire to accumulate and use up more and more while at the same time killing the very planet that sustains it.

NAME THREE ARTISTS THAT HAVE INSPIRED YOU?

- 1) My best friend as he is so talented and hard working.**
- 2) Caravaggio.....no need to explain....**
- 3) Francis Bacon because when I saw his big retrospective at the Pompidou centre when I was a kid it just blew my mind and he still does over and over.**

WHAT DEFINES SOMETHING AS A WORK OF ART FOR YOU?

A drawing, a painting, a sculpture, mixed with a bit of intent behind it and sometimes the context in which something is presented.

ANYTIME ANY PLACE WHICH ARTISTS BODY WOULD YOU
MOST LIKE TO INHABIT?

Honestly, I don't wish to be anyone else as I love what they have done and what I do, but at a push probably Caravaggio so that I could have one of his works to stare at on my wall at home as I would have painted it..... Also maybe Picasso's body when I am old as he looked in such great shape even up until he died.

JAMES O. WANTS TO COVER KIM AND KANYE IN NUTELLA

4 AUGUST 2014, BY FRANCESCA DUNN

My lips like sugar, this candy got you sprung, so call me your sugar, you love you some. As part of Gazelli Art House's Window Project, its glass facade and ground floor gallery are hosting Wotsit All About, the poppy project by James Ostrer. Referencing the corrupt globalisation of mass production, the increasingly dangerous method of food production and the world's sugar worship, his sweet-like-candy images will be available to view for the next month on London's Dover Street.

Destroyed by mass production, James' sugar monsters live beneath layers of candyfloss pink icing and glare at the world through Haribo eyes. A bitter sweet evil in our dreamy modern world. We got our sugar fix with the artist himself and discussed sweet treats, smushing food on faces and covering Kim and Kanye in Nutella.

WHAT INSPIRED THE SERIES?

I had been thinking a lot about food and what I have evolved into in terms of my own habits. I wanted to break some of those relationships by taking it to as extreme a place as possible. This soon became full submergence with various senses diminished, generating a space for intense self-examination. You wouldn't believe the weight of 45 quarter pounders and fries and how the smell on this kind of scale makes something that may seem appealing as an individual unit into something extremely revolting.

WHY FOCUS ON SUGAR?

Because it just fucks me up. Refined sugar is my one true enemy right now. It's like I just can't escape the cravings I have had ever since Tony the Tiger persuaded me to start munching bowls of sugar for breakfast when I was kid. This project was meant to be my final blow out like a coke addict might do before walking into rehab.

HOW DOES IT FEEL HAVING FOOD SMUSHED ON YOUR FACE?

- 1) It's like being in the womb of the marshmallow man's wife during a miscarriage.**
- 2) It feels like your two years old in a high chair being fed with a wooden spoon by a drunk person wearing a blindfold.**
- 2) It feels like you're in the bottom of a huge bowl of cake mix being manically stirred by Nigella Lawson on a coke binge.**

IF YOU COULD COVER ANYBODY IN THE WORLD IN SUGAR, WHO WOULD YOU PICK?

I would love to cover Prince Charles in ground up Duchy Original biscuits and loads of jam.

WHO WERE YOUR MODELS?

Did they enjoy the process? All my models are friends – some old, some new. Everyone loves it for different reasons but it's rare for the full body people to want to do it more than once because it's a major ordeal. One friend who is like the real-life version of Jason Bourne said it was the best day of his life and that he had never felt so in touch with himself.

YOUR FACES ARE BOTH TRIBAL AND ROBOTIC...
WAS THIS INTENTIONAL?

I had been thinking about the idea of redefining the human race into different contemporary tribes based on what they consume and the food supply chains so that aesthetic was always gonna be there. For me that robotic element is something about the impenetrable eyes some of them have. They seem welcoming and like they want to engage with you on a human level but then you just can't go any deeper than the surface. It's like what I imagine in the future you will feel when trying to tell your android cleaner how happy you are with them but they just don't have the capacity to receive that sentiment from you in a genuine way, leaving you feeling cold and alone.

WHAT WOULD YOU COVER KIM KARDASHIAN WITH?

She loves Kit Kats so I would definitely position a load of these sticking out along her spine and butt to sculpt her into a sort of sexy chocosaurus dinosaur. I would also love to shoot a portrait of her and Kanye covered in Nutella with loads of skips crisps and pink sugar crystals in the pose of Rodin's The Kiss.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT WOTSITS?

That weird orange fluff stuff is basically crisp napalm as it just doesn't come off your skin. There's a moment when the packet is finished and I start licking my fingers in a way that starts off as a pleasure but soon turns into me thinking; how far am I gonna take this? Am I gonna chew my fucking fingers off or shall I just go and washmy hands?

SWEET TOOTH GETS JAMES O. INTO STICKY SITUATIONS

5 AUGUST 2014, BY SIAN DOLDING

Sculpting the dark side to sugar addiction in a new show that will leave your tastebuds tingling for all the wrong reasons. The art world's food fetish is nothing new, triggering equal parts salivation and repulsion we gorge on so-called 'food porn' every day, saturating our screens with sugar. But beneath that candy cane filter there's a darker side to our fetishisation of all things sweet. With their Twix noses, salami decolletage and strawberry laces spewing from donut-shaped caverns, James Ostrer's saccharine-warped creations are delectably disturbing. Born out of a textbook childhood junk addiction, his new series Wotsit All About takes sugar worship to the extreme, sculpting mutated, larger-than-life candy characters from truckloads of pick 'n' mix favourites. Pushing his sitters to the extreme he smothers them in cream cheese, frazzles and ice cream cones, the food masks leaving a claustrophobic, bittersweet taste on the tongue. We caught up with James to talk mashed potato burns, the Pygmalion worship of his Frazzle-adorned creatures and the cathartic release he found while making them.

YOU SEEM TO LIKE TESTING THE BODY'S LIMITS AND PLAYING A VERY ACTIVE ROLE IN FRONT OF THE CAMERA AS WELL AS BEHIND IT—DID YOU ENJOY SLATHERING YOURSELF IN ALL THAT SUGAR OR WAS IT JUST A PLAIN GROSS?

I absolutely love my job even if I land out stinking of sugary cream cheese for a few days. The early ones were with dyed mash potato and I burnt my face on the first attempt because I was so excited I didn't wait for it to cool down. I have to say there were moments at these experimental stages of my work where I think the context of making art was the only thing separating me from an inmate in a cell doing a fecal smearing for emotional release.

THERE'S A STRONG TRIBAL THEME RUNNING THROUGH AS WELL—DID YOU USE ANY TRIBAL PHOTOGRAPHY AS A SET TEMPLATE?

I wanted to create a new tribe based on what we now eat and how far removed it is from nature. The distance between what comes out of the ground and what we then open from a packet. I see it as an anthropological reflection of our slavery to sugar addiction. I didn't use any specific references other than my general knowledge.

I FOUND THE PORTRAITS QUITE SURREAL THEY SEEM IRREVERENT AND WHIMSICAL AT FIRST BUT WHEN YOU LOOK CLOSER THEY ARE ACTUALLY QUITE DISTURBING AND GROTESQUE. WAS THIS WHAT YOU WERE GOING FOR?

I love the fact that you feel both these opposing emotions as I feel that's exactly what great advertising and packaging can do. It pulls you in with all these promises

of beauty, happiness and joy then you're left feeling empty and disturbed by wanting something different than yourself. I aimed to achieve the oscillation of these extremes. The works are also channeling some kind of unplanned emotion on the day that builds in an increasing arc with the crescendo moment of the final shot. While these excitations are therapeutic to me they have often been cathartic to the people that sit for me as well. One example would be where I was asked if I could source a specific brand of sweets from the country the person was brought up in. They had binged on these to an extremely unhealthy level in the past and the following day they called to say being completely submerged in them had provoked a deeply emotional reflection about their unhappiness all those years ago.

THIS LOOKS LIKE IT WAS SUCH A FUN PROJECT TO MAKE BUT WITH A DARKER MESSAGE AT ITS HEART—WHERE DID THE IDEA FIRST COME FROM?

It's definitely been fun but also tapped into all other emotions on my spectrum. My work is often like a constantly evolving self-help course where I am the therapist as well as the client. The specific intent with the start of this project was to expose myself to such extreme levels of junk food that I would no longer want to eat it again. I hoped to change my response to the mass of synthetic and saturated colour in shops, that hums and draws me in like a fly to a zapper. I wanted to convert those feelings into something new and beautiful.

YOU LIKE TO PICK APART 'THE DISCOMFORT THAT UNDERLINES WESTERN CULTURE'—WHAT IS IT ABOUT SUGAR WORSHIP THAT MAKES US UNCOMFORTABLE?

I tend to reflect on the darker aspects of human nature and the starting point I work from is often me. To simmer it down to its most basic reduction I think as a species it all started going wrong when we moved from being hunter-gathers to aspiring to gathering way too much. This has led to developed world civilizations appearing to have a sense of control but in reality feeling powerless. There are interesting changes. Look at the tobacco industries Malboro cowboy and how he was banned as is smoking in most environments now. Eventually I could see refined sugar being viewed in the same way as smoking is. The only difference is no one in fashion or film ever regarded being fat as cool.

FINALLY, WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE CANDY OR HAVE YOU BEEN THOROUGHLY PUT OFF NOW?

I definitely thought I was but I still seem to love an old school jammy dodger. Which would be ok if I didn't have to eat the whole packet then feel shit.

INTERVIEW WITH JAMES O. BY AESTHETICA BLOG

18 AUGUST 2014, BY AESTHETICA BLOG

Taking our appetite for sugar as a starting point to create images of a corrupted globalisation, James Ostrer takes over the glass façade and ground floor of the Gazelli Art House, as part of its Window Project, to present the unsavoury side of our addiction to the sweet stuff. Ostrer's photographs of human subjects covered in layers of sweets and foodstuffs have a cartoon-like absurdity while exploring self-destructive behaviours and drawing attention to the volumes of sugar that flow through our bodies and our dietary culture.

HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN THIS SUBJECT?

My dissertation at university 15 years ago was on “the ethics of advertising to children” and that was the starting point of my interest in the science of advertising and its effect. I consider sugxar to be one of the most dangerous drug addictions of our time which starts with new born children being enticed by the cartoon characters on packaging. I see Tony the Tiger from Kellogg's Frosties and his friends as the street dealers for the corporate cartels. This project was all about me unpicking all the subliminal and direct messaging from these creatures over my lifetime that still leads me to make the terrible nutritional choices I often make.

CAN YOU EXPLAIN HOW YOU SET ABOUT PRODUCING THE IMAGE?

It started with me deciding to engulf myself in such vast quantities of refined sugar and junk food that I would no longer want to eatthem ever again. I also wanted to break down the human species into new contemporary tribes based on what we now eat and where it comes from. These two desires led to many car full loads of junk food and vast quantities of cream cheese being bought and then smothered over loads of people to sculpt them into my new icons for change.

ARE YOU CONSCIOUS ABOUT THE FOOD YOU EAT?

Whenever I visit my mum she says to me, “Are you still on the lentils or do you want a bacon sandwich?”. I go through phases of swinging from bad to good without much of a middle ground. Also my one real vice is that I love eating out for most meals so there tends to be a lot less control in what is in the food. When you order a “healthy” chicken salad it may as well be a Big Mac with all the dressing and croutons....

WHAT DO YOU WANT AUDIENCES TO TAKE FROM THE WORK?

As an artist I want people to feel something and whatever happens is great. This is the first show that I have ever had where not one person out of everyone

that came up to me at the opening asked me what the work was about. They all immediately launched into what the works meant to them on a personal and or global level. This is the greatest compliment and experience I have ever had as it means the works are doing what they are meant to.....

WHAT DO YOU HAVE PLANNED FOR NEXT?

I don't like to discuss my new projects before I have completed them but I am very excited about what is going on..... On a personal level the other major focus is that I want to start to cook for myself as healthily as I cook for my dog. He nearly died a year ago from having cancer and a heart condition. I started to hand cook chicken and vegetables and sometimes goose fat for him every day and he literally runs around like a puppy again. The happiness and energy he has now is unbelievable and I have no comprehension as to why I can't do the same thing for myself.





WOTSIT ALL ABOUT

EF 117 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diassec Mount, 50cm × 33cm.



EF 122.25 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasac Mount, 50cm × 33cm.





EF 124 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasac Mount, 50cm x 33cm.



EF 126.75 2014, Archival Pigment Print On Diasac Mount, 50cm × 33cm.



EF 125.5 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasc Mount, 50cm × 33cm.



EF 127.5 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasec Mount, 50cm x 33cm.

EF 133.2 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasac Mount, 50cm × 33cm.





EF 135.16, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 50cm x 33cm.



EF 137 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasec Mount, 50cm × 33cm.



EF 127.6 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasac Mount, 50cm × 33cm.



EF 145.4 2014, Archival Pigment Print on Diasec Mount, 50cm × 33cm.

EF 148.66, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 50cm × 33cm.





WINDOW PROJECT: JAMES OSTRER, 2014



WINDOW PROJECT: JAMES OSTRER, 2014

EF 137.63, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 50cm × 33cm.





EF 113, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 102cm x 68cm.



EF 137.8, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 101.5cm x 67cm.



EF 135.16, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 50cm x 33cm.



EF 145.6, 2014, archival pigment print on diasec mount, 152cm × 101.5cm.

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