

## **Edible Body**

Fabio Weintraub<sup>1</sup>

Parts of a female human body cast in chocolate and marzipan. Breasts, mouths, bosoms, pubes... in life size or reduced size, served on a tabletop. Three women dressed in red, black and white, respectively three characters played by the artist, who molded the parts from her own body conduct the meal, a totemic feast in which rather than eating the tyrannical father of a primitive horde, as Freud propounded, table guests consume the ever-coveted mother.

Albeit very brief, this description duly represents the most recent work by Rosa Esteves, **Corpo Comestível** [Edible body]. This work of anthropophagic nature updates the debate on the difficult relationships involving art and consumption in the contemporary world. While countering the fetish of health, the worshipping of the young body, the muscle-spectacle (the last disguise of the globalizing U.S. puritanism), the experience actualized here is one of an erasable record of a body demiurgically configured on the margins of narcissistic traps, safe from the conventional, ready-made images made available to us by the imperatives of serialized beauty and advertising.

On the one hand, said record is not strictly "natural", it incorporates accidents and imperfections yielded during the molding process. On the other hand, its capacity to make the body time-resistant (paralyzed as it is in gypsum and silicone negatives) is offset by the impermanence of the material used for the pieces, i.e., food destined for satiating the feaster-viewer.

As to references in the field of the visual arts, **Corpo Comestível** engages in dialogue, for example, with the oeuvre of artist Amélia Toledo, Rosa Esteves's college teacher in the mid 1970s. More specifically, the work has to do with Toledo's *Reunião* (1975) shown in a retrospective held recently at Museu de Arte de São Paulo MASP, and also at the exhibition *Jovem Arte Contemporânea* (JAC), at a time when censorship and repression [imposed by the military dictatorship in Brazil] muffled any voice that dared causing the choir of the happy ones to go out of tune. In Toledo's work, as in Esteves's, in addition to a continuity in the selection of procedures, the icon of oral consumption serves to represent that which the world has presented as unpalatable at different instances of our historical experience.

Another important point to be stressed concerns the recovery of a certain image of the feminine at a historical moment in which genre distinctions are toned down, and

---

<sup>1</sup> Poet and author of *Novo Endereço* (awarded the Casa de Las Américas prize, 2003).

eroticism swerves toward the realm of transgender, androgynous charm, the prosthesis-body, and fake sexual pleasure. Thus, whether by taking "aging" for theme, or by underscoring women's "nourishing power", Rosa Esteves once again stages a certain representation of the feminine that sexual revolution managed to refute remarkably well.

Finally, if the body is (in the words of Merleau-Ponty) at once predictive, reflexive and visible, and if the body-world relation is one of esthesiological nature there is a flesh of the body and a flesh of the world (and an interiority that propagates to and fro between the two, in a continual reversibility) , then these body parts, these fossil imprints of the world, will go on being fine, appetizing internal objects, and causing all the mouths of the spirit to water.