

2019

## Consumption

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*Bard College*

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Senior Projects Spring 2019

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Footer Logo

## **Consumption**

Aurora Abzug

This body of work is neither a chronicle of my eating disorder, nor a record of my recovery. The oil paintings and graphite drawings that make up this exhibition, seek to explore my difficult, complicated, and often self-contradictory relationship with food, and how it affects my relationships with my friends and with myself.

I am particularly interested in eating rituals. These are the sets of cultural prescriptions for the ways in which food and the process of eating can define a social interaction. Ice cream picnics, brunch dates, and Instagram snapshots all lie at the heart of my culture's social expectations, uncomfortably alongside notions of body positivity, and a twisting, hypocritical rhetoric of what the female body is allowed to look like and do in public.

Eating rituals have always been a challenge for me to navigate. When I was a patient at an eating disorder clinic, they were my most loathsome chore. In contrast, I look back on meals with dear ones as some of my happiest memories. Social eating is always tinged with anxiety for me, but now it is almost always the high point of my day. In my art, I seek to explore the many different rituals I perform that remove food from the category of survival necessity, and enter it into the realm of spiritual experience. Food is a symbol; it binds societies together, and links humans both with animals and the divine. In my work I employ the mechanisms of food symbolism to engage in dialog with art history, and with contemporary ideas about the female body and disordered eating.

Consumption is not just about the physical act. Even before the rise of social media, we were encouraged to consume each other's lives, and symbolically, each other's bodies. The academic traditions of painting female nudes and memento mori still lifes are each testament to that. I borrow motifs, imagery and (to an extent) technique from the history of academic European painting in order to lend an air of authority to my works that are often frivolous in subject matter. I depict my interactions with food and relationships with my peers in a way in which their seriousness and significance cannot be contested. In rendering these images realistically, even photo-realistically at times, I am laying bare my obsessive personality (that which has always been susceptible to control issues such as eating disorder), channeling it into something creative instead of destructive, and encouraging the viewer to think more deeply about their own visual and gastronomical consumption.









