

ART

Sweets to the Sweet

February is a wicked month. The days are short and usually gray. Only one thing could possibly cure the malaise of mid-winter: cupcakes. Those delicious muffin-sized bombs of sugar have become a cultural phenomenon—as Oakland conceptual artist Tara Goe explains, stores specializing in cupcakes have opened up all over the United States.

In response, Goe has created the installation *1000 Cupcakes/I Want Sugar* at Mama Buzz Café, turning the coffee shop into a non-functioning cupcake shop, complete with handmade awning, a cupcake display in the window, lettering on the window and a movable pastry case—all in effusive pastel pink. It is best to think of *1000 Cupcakes/I Want Sugar* as one of those garish pastry paintings that Bay Area pop master Wayne Thiebaud brought to life.

One of the current trends in art is to offer a critique of some aspect of popular culture while dabbling in the very thing you are examining—like performance artist Cory Archangel building a violent video game that allows you to shoot celebrities who have already been gunned down by gun-wielding maniacs,

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including Pope John Paul II and Andy Warhol. That is where Goe's collaborators step in.

Cecilia Elguero serves up hand-sewn cupcake sculptures that open to reveal miniature worlds. Hannah Reiff dishes out unique prints of



Look but don't taste.

delicious sweets and Erin Hagstrom has built fanciful cupcakes out of paper—all inedible, of course. Lisa Solomon, whose work I have long admired, lyrically treads the line between art and craft. Putting the edge back in eating, Solomon delicately draws sumptuous cupcakes, ornately decorated on top of paper doilies. Unfortunately, the sugar-flower decorations reference poisonous flowers, making you think a bit more about what you cram into your mouth for comfort.

1000 Cupcakes/I Want Sugar, Feb. 2-23, Mama Buzz Café, 2318 Telegraph Ave. in Oakland. Admission is free. For information call (510) 465-4073 or visit www.mamabuzzcafe.com.

—Timothy Buckwalter