

Jennifer Vanderpool
Bemused
Bandini Art, Culver City, California
September - October 2006

Jennifer Vanderpool BY EVE WOOD

Bandini Art, Culver City CA September 16 - October 14, 2006

Shakespeare once said "'tis an ill cook who cannot lick his own fingers." And indeed, Jennifer Vanderpool's skewed, faux-delectable culinary fare bears the trace of an artist whose fingers are most definitely and deliciously raw. Vanderpool's newest effort, "Bemused," at Culver City's Bandini Art, reads like a confectioner's auto-da-fé, chronicling the artist's advanced slippage into syrupy insanity. In the past, Vanderpool has dealt with issues of insatiability in the context of formal sculpture, but here she's really pumped up the volume. Day-Glo and AstroTurf stalactites and pastel bubblewrap flowers burst upwards from the floor, providing one with a sense of what it must have been like living in Emerald City, albeit on acid. Also, Vanderpool has constructed a series of wildly inventive mock "desserts" from resin and positioned them on pebbles, mounds of sand, and other elements suggesting the natural world. Whipped plaster cream serves as an additional element of surprise, erupting anarchically from various crevices and holes.

In her artist's statement, Vanderpool claims her mother raised her to be a domestic diva, though I doubt she anticipated the breadth and scope of her daughter's obsessive compulsion. In lots of ways, the creation of these so-called "environmental installations" appears to be an act of rebellion, addiction, or controlled mania. Colors don't simply appear, they shout, run (like dye), or erupt into being, resulting in a riot of clashing hues and contours. Vanderpool says she ponders the shape and size of the items involved, asking herself questions like: "Is the texture interesting? How best can I employ it to create an artwork that activates the exhibition space? What phenomenological connotations are associated with the color and smell of the product?" The work thus maintains a palpable sense of the absurd while also engaging in a literal form of domestic drudgery, as if some housewife had gone mad one day and then decided to cover her tracks.

Vanderpool's vibrantly colored candies, beauty products, landscaping gear, and mundane bric-a-brac look simultaneously scrumptious yet sickening, suggestive of obsessive behavior further heightened by performance videos included in the installation. These videos emphasize the utter absurdity of making simulated inedible candy, or indeed anything beautiful yet ultimately pointless, thus drawing parallels between senselessly elaborate (because soon to be eaten) confectionery and art making, both of which can arguably be considered futile acts. Even though every item here has its appointed station and purpose, often the materials corrode and dissolve over time, just like art that isn't "archival" or food left out too long on display.

