

*Supplies and Demands* is a group exhibition of recent work and ongoing projects by Carmen Argote, Will Benedict, Maryam Jafri, Nonfood, Michael Queenland, and Asha Schechter, that explore the social, personal, and use values associated with consumer goods.

Every day we interact with a wealth of products that are meant for our consumption – a sea of stuff at our literal disposal. Through advertising, repeated purchases, and continued use, we grow a preference for particular goods, and develop buying patterns that suit our particular tastes. At times becoming loyal to a brand, these objects become extensions of ourselves and shape our identities. They reveal our individual habits, needs, and desires, and carry shared cultural signifiers.

The artists in *Supplies and Demands* engage with consumer products in their practices, asking us to reexamine our relationships with and understanding of these items. The selected artwork and projects specifically focus on goods that we eat, drink, smoke, or cook with – nodding to the physical act of consumption and brand embodiment. They address the quick convenience these products provide, as either packaged, ready-to-go goods, or time-saving kitchen appliances. They also collectively illustrate the range of consumer markets – from high-end to working-class; niche to generic. Using commonplace goods as a starting point, the works and projects in *Supplies and Demands* feel familiar yet uncanny. Decontextualized from their original use, they challenge us to give them deeper consideration.

On display in the exhibition is Carmen Argote's *Staircase Dress* (2017), a recent sculpture by the artist examining notions of class, culture, and custom through the widely shared ritual of brewing a daily cup of coffee. For the work, Argote acquired a dozen coffee makers from thrift stores and placed them atop a dressed staircase structure created in relation to her own physical measurements – placing herself among those who engage in this common morning routine. Abandoned by their original owners to make way for new, state-of-the-art appliances, the coffee makers are made functional again in Argote's sculpture. Recalling an outmoded middle-class aesthetic, they symbolize the buying cycle and desire to keep up with current consumer trends.

Michael Queenland's *Untitled (Foreign Tongue)* (2017) and *Untitled (Underfoot)* (2017) also examine our patterns of consumption and the cultural associations embedded in the products we regularly use and discard. While a resident at the American Academy in Rome, Queenland began to record the debris he encountered on the streets, including items such as cigarette packs and champagne tops. Later scanning his archive and transferring the images onto ceramic tiles, he created a series of floorbound sculptures with insets of marble and granite. Bringing together the materials we traditionally conjure when imagining grand Italian floorscapes with the reality that

litters the streets, his works offer a more nuanced understanding of this specific locale by examining the everyday products its people engage with.

Maryam Jafri's series *Generic Corner* (2015-ongoing) explores a moment in American consumer culture during the late 1970s in which generic product labeling was common in the marketplace. Household items such as soap or beer were sold in stark, black-and-white packaging simply identifying their contents, serving as the cheap alternative to their branded competitors. Jafri's works focus on this phenomenon, before retailers began producing their own in-house labels in the 1980s that simulated the look of colorful, highly-designed brands. Pointing to the increased value given to advertising for captivating consumers, her series also brings to mind the social stigma that was associated with shopping in the generic section.

The importance of design in consumer products is prevalent in Asha Schechter's works that examine how desire is created through imagery and branding. For *Talenti Container with Lemon and Avocado modeled and rendered by Orest Moskal* (2018) and *Fruit Paper Straw (Cherry) modeled and rendered by Miloš Jakubes* (2018), Schechter employed modelers to translate an ice cream container and a straw into virtual 3D objects, creating realistic, detailed portrayals. However, printed as flat, one-sided images, and blown up in scale to tremendous proportions, the objects take on an uncanny dimension. Looming over us, we are drawn in by their presence, as we are by captivating labels and ads.

Nonfood, a recently formed company by a team of artists and food scientists including Lucy Chinen, Mariliis Holm, Dennis Oliver Schroerr and Sean Raspet, is at the forefront of an emerging consumer market of food products. On display in the exhibition is the second version of their Nonbar – a ready-to-eat protein bar that features algae as the key ingredient. As highly nutritional, sustainable, and efficient crops, algae have the potential to become a vital food source in our insecure ecological climate. Nonfood's mission is to change the culture around food waste by creating a product with a low-impact carbon footprint, compared to traditional plant and animal based goods. Through their sleek, minimal branding and product design, they are also rethinking the aesthetic experiences we have with food and its packaging.

Will Benedict's video *Head in Microwave* (2018) presents a rather dystopian vision in which an animated head is stuck spinning continuously in a microwave oven. While the video exists in a distant science fiction, the easily identifiable brand of the appliance as "Whirlpool" pulls us back into reality and the present day – and one cannot help but make the association of the whirl in the title to the whirling of the head. In the scene, the figure is trapped by the appliance, becoming

themselves a good for potential consumption. Although set in an imagined realm, the work imparts a message of caution given the state of our quickly changing climate.

*Supplies and Demands* is curated by Paulina Samborska, Curatorial Assistant at Ben Maltz Gallery at Otis College of Art and Design.

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