Beyond Our Ideal Wonderland
Curioser and Curioser

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All my life I have been a daydreamer. As a child I craved sweets – candies, chocolates, cookies, ice cream, jellies – and was frustrated by my parents’ prohibition against eating them. At the age of eleven I resolved to deal with my frustration by becoming a baker. I imagined being a baker, making, tasting, and having desserts. In middle school I had an opportunity to study confectionery arts, which I applied to and was accepted. However, the program was quite expensive and my family could not afford it. Around this time, when I was fifteen years old, my parents decided to send me abroad for school. I studied in the Philippines until I graduated high school. I still wanted to attend culinary school, but my parents objected. We came up with a compromise: even though I had never drawn, painted, or sculpted, I decided to go to art school because art seemed to me the closest thing to baking: you use your hands, and you make something.

At Binghamton University I decided to pursue printmaking because it was a new medium for me. In Korea printmaking is only now becoming common; growing up I had never encountered a print. I enjoyed the printmaking processes, partly due to my lack of drawing skills, as well as my interest in baking. I chose to render desserts. Not until I came to New Paltz as a graduate student, did it dawn on me that I could more deeply explore my relationship with sweets.

When eating sweets, I feel an escape from stressful moments or the tough aspects of life. I incessantly dream of changing my life, and am fairly certain that most people imagine getting away from reality like I do. The desires to constantly be around, smell, look at, touch and taste sweets habitually control my train of thought.
and constantly influence my work. I believe my prints, digital paintings, and installations are reflective of my own personal desires. It also deals with memories, senses and a psychological connection to life. When I feel frustration, I begin to imagine an ideal fantasy to combat these emotions. This gives me the ability to transform my train of thought and start to design a mysterious, desirable, imaginary place. Then I become curious about where the desires come from, what the effects of having desire are, how it affects our actual life, and why is it important. I have researched other artists who also use desserts and confections in their works for inspiration.

Wayne Thiebaud's paintings and prints are inspirational to my work. Thiebaud described himself as an old-fashioned painter with the ability to excite nostalgia, be sentimental and feel sweetness in daily life. He chooses the universal images of cakes and confections as an idea in his work and then depicts them with heavy pigment. Claus Oldenburg's enormous soft sculptures also influence my work. His food sculptures utilize unusual proportions, oversized sculptures of typically small objects. The monumentality of his work reflects the object fetishism of a capitalist society, a society obsessed with colorful consumer goods, all while making art out of ordinary objects (Collins). My work is also obsessed with sweets as a symbol of fetishism, but its' emphasis lies more in the means of psychological or biological grounding of desire.

The philosopher Plato wrote that the result of drawing and painting are “dreams created by man for those who are awake.” He believed the purpose of pictorial art to be imitative, but image making could be either imitative or representational, imagination or the fantastic (Kuehni 148). Like his belief, if we are
capable of imagining a certain image based on emotions, we will take our first steps to create our fantasy world.

*Brain I - III*, is the key that opens the door to my ideal, imaginary wonderland because this is the place where my curiosities come from.

It consists of three different prints in wooden frames installed in line, to show the breakdown of the brain. A variety of intaglio techniques were used to print these works, including line etching, soft-ground, aquatint, sugar-lift, and white-ground. When each technique is etched in the nitric acid, it produces a unique outcome. The piece features a rendition of the human brain, which is arguably the most important part of the body and constructs every action inside of it. *Brain I*, the brain inside a skull, shows a whole view of a human head.
Brain II, the middle print, depicts the two halves, or hemispheres, that divide it into the right and left side.

Each side controls different parts of the body; like instinctive feelings or logical thinking. Furthermore, it is divided into four sections, called lobes that control intuitive operations (McMillan 77-79). Brain III, the smallest print, emphasizes the limbic system, also known as the emotional brain.
It is a cerebral organ structured deep inside of the central brain and deals with emotions, memories and stimulation. We usually remember funny and sad memories longer than other kinds of memories because the information gathered during that emotional situation is easily entered and saved in the limbic system. All of these functions are important because they are linked all together, which affects our lives.

_Brain I – III_, began with a brief sketch of the brain on a zinc plate, which was put into the acid to achieve an outline. When the etched lines are stable, the plate develops textures and value is created with rosin aquatint and sugar-lift. While the plate builds up the brain form, white-ground is finally applied for painterly qualities. Once a plate is ready to run through the printing press, modified ink is applied and lightly wet printmaking paper is placed in proper registration. These final prints are cut out and layered with spaces for illustrating a realistic form of the brain and creating depth.
Human sensations are stimulated when we taste, smell, see, hear, and touch; composing the five senses. The sense of smell develops earliest among the five senses. Moreover, this sense is the only one that directly delivers information to the emotional brain, not passing through other cerebral organs. That is why scent gives direct influence to our emotions and it also unconsciously recollects certain memories. *Happiness-Aid I - V*, are five stainless steel cabinets. Frosted glass doors with the mark of the first aid cross invite you to recognize the contents inside as medicine; gypsum air fresheners, confections, and mini jams.


*Happiness-Aid IV and V*, contain four different scents of gypsum air fresheners. These scented handmade air fresheners are created with plaster powder and fragrance oils pressed in the shape of bar soap.

*Happiness-Aid IV – V*: Stainless steel first aid cabinet, Gypsum air-fresheners, 2016
The scented objects use fragrance oils to create the sweet smelling flavors, which consist of chocolate cookies, cinnamon buns, strawberry shortcake, and blueberry pie. It also features a digitally printed image of those desserts. When you smell the objects, they have the ability to bring you to a certain time period or memory. Recollecting memories increases your desire to open the cabinets. It is also makes the viewer want to choose one of the air fresheners and keep it as long as possible as a means to further connect to the memory. Then, in a way, you can exist in the past and the present at the same time.

Our brain works in a more complex way than one might think; other organs like the nose and the tongue acknowledge stimuli, affecting our memories. The sense of smell is closely connected with the sense of taste. A variety of confections in different containers can be found in *Happiness-Aid I and II*, and represent an example of how desires affect our lives.

![Image of cabinets](image_url)

*Happiness-Aid I – V: Stainless steel first aid cabinet, Different types of confections and mini jams, 2016*

These cabinets contain glass jars, mini glass bottles, macaron shaped cases, floral cases, and mini jams. Within the containers, different types of confections, like candies, chocolates, jellies, jams, and spreads can be found.
Sometimes we unnecessarily take medicine, but what if we replace that medicine with our favorite confections? When we need an adjustment in our emotions, like the title of this work implies, one can read each prescription found in *Happiness-Aid III*.

*Happiness-Aid III*: Stainless steel first aid cabinet, 2016

It contains prints of quotes or magical suggestions like “Take me! It will make you happy” as a prescription. Obviously, sweets cannot cure illness, but we can imagine a placebo effect creating a conscious desire; a human brain does not recognize what is imaginary or a reality. Our reality can be developed into our ideal fantasy world that we always wanted or dreamed of, simply by imagining it.

Vision is another significant sense that functions within the eyes. We see “upside-down, distorted images inside our tiny eyeballs but what we see is a vivid three-dimensional world out there in front of us. This transformation is nothing short of a miracle”. This is what we call a perception, which consciously helps us to be aware of the things around us (Ramachandran 24-25). In visual communication, perception refers to external processes whereas daydreaming of the “pictures in the mind’s eye,” is considered an internal process. The brain works like a time machine, in an "inward process" to travel through the past and in to the future while we live in
the present. This fantasizing begins a sequence of events, memories, or creatively constructed images of future events (Singer 3). My dream of being in a patisserie and the reality of my external environment do not correspond with each other, which is the inspiration for creating *My Ideal Wonderland I - IV*.


*My Ideal Wonderland I - IV* depicts my daydreams of craving desserts. I picked my favorite dessert images—coffees, chocolate milkshakes, macarons, cake, cookies, doughnuts, and ice cream—and layered them with a selfie, eating these items. These prints use a variety of colors; the colors result from the interaction between light, materials, and our own vision (Kuehni 8). When the eyes recognize a certain color, they send information to the sensory parts of the brain; then they utilize visual communication that makes you feel several kinds of emotion. The size of these prints and the repetitive layers helps one engage the sense of vision to maximize the creation of a fantasy world. Pastel tones of multicolor dots in the background and a circular shape of transparent images create a hypnotizing illusion. Consequently, these prints will offer an unending mysterious or whimsical atmosphere that can influence the viewers' emotional response.
Unending Curtains are dark, layered fabrics that are covered with repetitive linocuts of desserts. The dark color hides what is behind the first curtain but if they are opened, we can clearly see what is behind the second.

Unending Curtains: Silkscreen on fabric, 2016

Constant curiosity or imagining unclear pictures might interrupt a stable view in reality; however, the human brain does not determine what is fantasy or what is reality. This suggests that our reality can develop alongside our desirable dream world. To achieve happiness in our lives, we constantly need to open our mind’s eye and remove the curtains of reality. “In Aristotle’s words, “we are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” (Shahar 7-8) We need to continually exercise our imaginations in order to shape our lives into new realities.
A book titled *Mine* is displayed on a pedestal in the midpoint of *Unending Curtains*. This book illustrates a journey about a little girl that loves eating sweets everyday. She craves sweets all the time, but is unable to fulfill her desire.

*Mine*: Digital print on Hahnemuhle photo gloss paper, 2016

*Mine* illustrates the dream of the little girl chasing her desires within her own world. Each page is depicted with full of color and childish images. At the end the story, the little girl wakes up to live another day of her reality, always awaiting the return to her ideal imaginary dreamland of sweets.

Currently unsatisfying reality makes us want to imagine living in our daydreams. Daydreams may even be more than just wishful explorations; they may be pricelessly useful. They are our rehearsals for future actions (Singer 119). They suggest new and alternative ways of dealing with reality, thereby offering us a chance to decide on a more effective approach to life.

Try to enjoy my ideal wonderland with every sense.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY
