

October 31, 2007

What Would Jesus Taste Like?

You know you're in trouble when there are more press people at an art opening than anyone else. Such was the situation Saturday night at The Proposition gallery in Chelsea. It was the "the second coming," if you will, of the life-sized chocolate Jesus made by Cosimo Cavallaro. The original chocolate Jesus was shown at The Lab Gallery last April, timed to coincide with Holy week. The gallery felt compelled to close the exhibition in the face of right-wing religious protests.



This exhibition, *Chocolate Saints...Sweet Jesus* (earnestly termed the "Resurrection" by PR people circling the room), was meant to give the public a chance to see the work anew, in a different and less judgmental context. This Jesus, instead of being crucified—a dreadful thing to do to a luscious hunk of chocolate—was reclining in agony on a white ruffled tablecloth looking for the all the world like a demented, man-sized petit fours.

In this "resurrection," Jesus is circled by a group of small chocolate saints. They resemble cheesy souvenirs from a second-rate shrine.

We walked through a phalanx of whirring cameras and reporters who were eagerly hoping that someone would say something controversial about the work. It was an attempt at a "scene," complete with burly security guards with earpieces and hot-and-cold running PR people studiously explaining the artist's intent. The air conditioning was blasting away—presumably to keep the chocolate from melting. We went to the show hoping to find the delicious, sinful smell of chocolate wafting through the gallery, but it was too cold both in temperature and spirit for anything to waft. The gallery was so cold that everyone had their coat on. Everyone, that is, except the Son of God.

Left on its own, perhaps this work would transfix and transcend. Perhaps. It's difficult, however, to find the art through the flashbulbs.