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Williamsburg Gallery Exhibits A Candy Coated Metamorphosis

BY SUZANNE STROEBE

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Kyoung Eun Kang's *Happy Birthday* is a stunning, disturbing piece, a reflection upon the messiness of birth and life.

The project room of A.M. Richard Fine Art is a small austere space, painted white from floor to ceiling—ideal for contemplating Kyoung Eun Kang's installation of her sweet performance piece.

A Plexiglas vitrine runs along one wall like a modernist philatory, containing chunks of hardened cotton candy, detritus from the performance being screened on the adjacent wall. The dark pink, blue and purple forms resemble minerals, and are embedded with long strands of the artists' hair.



Kang's performance begins slowly. A plump, worm-like form sculpted from large swaths of cotton candy lies curled up on the floor. The room is painted a clean, bright white, so the body seems to float, alone in a peaceful and safe place.

The camera pans in, and the cotton candy cocoon begins to squirm as a pink tongue pokes out and a chin is revealed. As the body inside patiently licks its way out, a pool of drool resembling blood widens on the perfect white floor. This is when the viewer begins to realize that there is a gruesome aspect to this performance.

During the 15-minute video, Kang eats several pounds of cotton candy that she has wrapped around her naked body. After the first few moments, the act of eating becomes more urgent, until she is ripping chunks of congealed spun sugar off her naked flesh and out of her long hair, chewing it off her legs and arms with darkly stained teeth. Watching her stuff fistfuls of sugar floss into her mouth, again and again, is simultaneously beautiful – like watching a butterfly emerge from a cocoon – and horrific – like witnessing an act of auto-cannibalism.

-Suzanne Stroebe