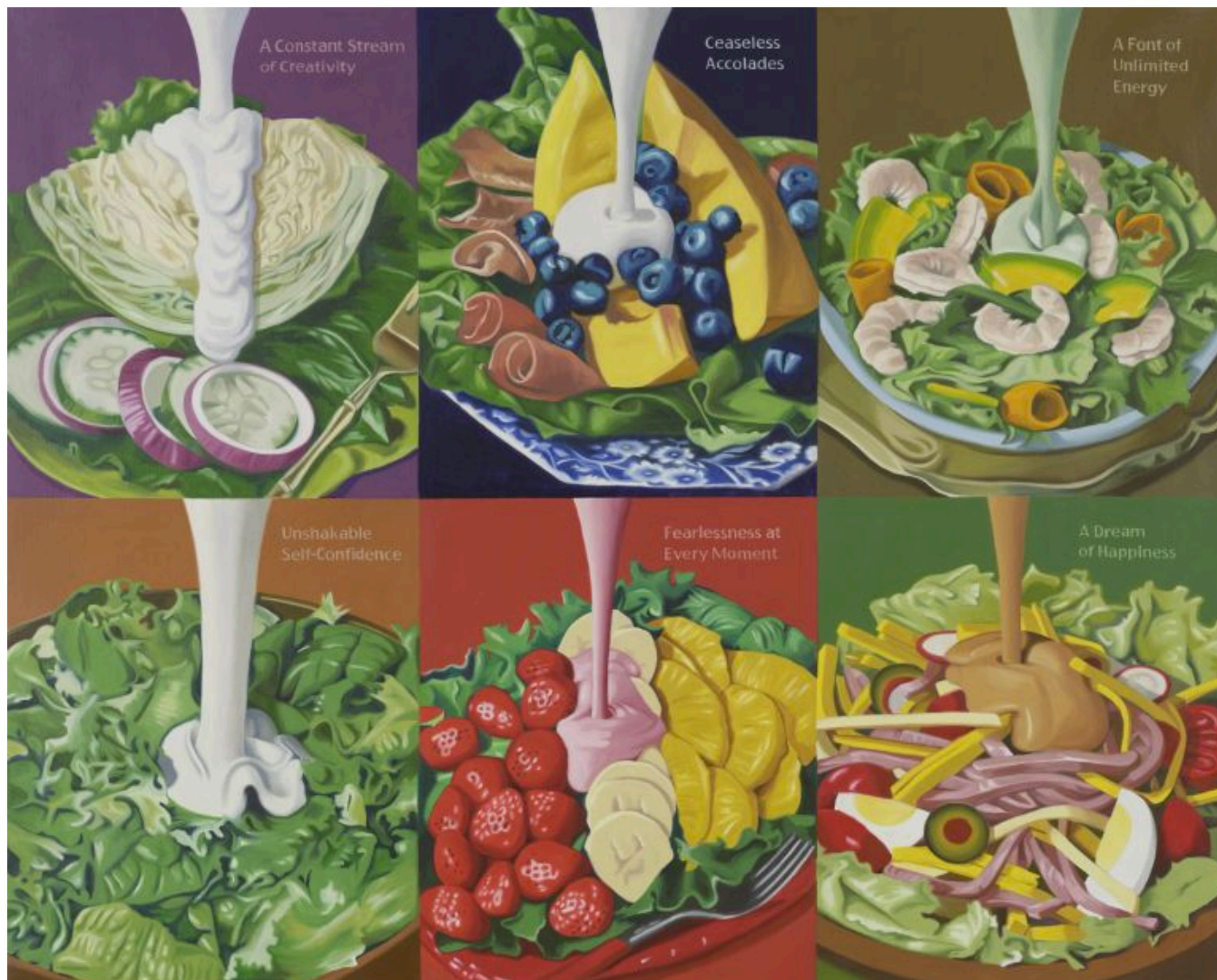


BLOUINARTINFO

Julia Jacquette Plays with Perception

BY MARGARET CARRIGAN | FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Julia Jacquette. "A Constant Stream," 2014. Oil on linen, 48 x 60 in. Collection of the artist, New York. © 2016 Julia Jacquette. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph by Shinji Otani.

The imagery of Julia Jacquette's hyperrealistic paintings is recognizable yet unplaceable. Drawn from common magazine ads and brand catalogs, the artist zooms in on a specific detail from her source material before magnifying it to near abstraction: the edge of an ear, a sparkling cascade of necklaces, a close-up of floating glitter. It doesn't even matter what's being promoted in these ads — at this macro scale, all that's left is an aura of opulence so familiar that you realize you've already been sold.

“Unrequited and Acts of Play,” a survey of Jacquette’s work now on view at the [Wellin Museum of Art](#) at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, dives head first into the artist’s propensity for upsized iconography. Curated by director Tracy L. Adler, the exhibition features two site-specific commissioned murals, each 12 by 16 feet, which greet you as you enter the galleries. With the help of six Hamilton College students, Jacquette rendered the pristine, sparkling waves of a J. Crew catalog poolside scene and a Secrets resort ad, respectively, at near pool-size dimensions. The result is an immersive introduction to the mid-career artist’s oeuvre.

“Over the past 50 years, advertising has largely been the medium by which we learn beauty,” explains Jacquette, “art became kind of skeptical of beauty when it turned toward the abstract and conceptual.” In her obtuse representations of artfully evocative ads, the artist says that she is confessing to her own seduction: “In the critique I provide, I’m admitting my own defeat. I’m a sucker for these images. I find them beautiful.”

The exhibition also features a selection of Jacquette’s gouaches, which often serve as studies for her larger works. “For me, demystifying how an artist works is really important,” says Adler. “Julia has never exhibited her gouaches before, but I think showing these works illuminates her practice in a new way.” Also on view are several of the artist’s food paintings, which depict in grid form (à la a grocery store circular) idealized renderings of desserts, cuts of meat, salads, etc. The images are overlaid with text that expresses the artist’s inner fears and doubts about her work as if her vulnerability is the price of the everyday comestibles.

A second part of the exhibition showcases Jacquette’s childhood upbringing in graphic memoir form. A series of 60 gouaches on paper, “Playground of My Mind,” explores the adventure playgrounds of New York City from the 1960s and ’70s, on which the artist grew up playing. Like her painting, the memoir reflects upon the conflicted emotions and idealized aspects of the past; and how both our physical and media environments can indelibly alter our perception of the world.