



The Drawing Center

DRAWING PAPERS

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LEVITY

Selections Spring 2007

Rachel Perry Welty

Born 1962 in Tokyo, Japan
Lives and works in Boston, MA

Rachel Perry Welty's fruit-sticker drawings mix Minimalist aesthetics with Pop humor and homespun craft; she collects, consumes, sorts, and reprocesses materials that relate as much to the practical task of filling her kitchen cupboard as to meditating on the feminist implications and socio-economic ramifications thereof. *Fruit Bowl*, approximately four by seven feet, is composed of over 60 stickers taken from a variety of fruit patterned abstractly in thin, bead-like elliptical strands. The specific labels that adorn every brand and type of fruit provide an anthology of colors, shapes, patterns, designs, and letters for her drawings, which she builds out by thinly slicing each sticker, laying down one sliver at a time, and joining them end to end. Steering the placement of each sliver to, as the artist explains, "turn corners and stay on the page," Welty ensures that the process results in a shape that always approximates a rough circle—her way of acknowledging the cyclical nature of consumption: "We shop, we eat, we sleep, and we get up and do it all again," she says.

Welty expresses her obsession with mapping the remnants of her daily rituals by radically reducing their signifiers into post-Minimalist time-based works. In 2000, she transcribed by hand, symbol for symbol, word for word, 645 pages of her son's medical chart, creating a grid format on 23 sheets of vellum (each measuring 18 by 24 inches) that is ultimately reminiscent of the work of Mel Bochner and Agnes Martin. Her piece *208,896 Loaves* (2004), a monumental cylindrical primary-form sculpture, was made out of 15 years worth of variously colored bread tags.

Welty is keenly interested in how nature is branded and commodified, as is exemplified by her neat arrangements of miniature handmade reproductions of the items on supermarket shelves. *Choice (Cheez-it)* (2006) is a tiny installation of laser-print and adhesive reproductions of the 16 extant varieties of Cheez-It crackers, arranged in two rows. Since 2004, Welty has been making works on paper from her impressive collection of fruit and vegetable stickers, combining free-form and geometric configurations against pure white grounds. She claims allegiance to Andy Warhol's Campbell Soup cans and Brillo Boxes and to Gabriel Orozco's reliance on the mutability of mundane forms.

Although barely legible, Welty's sliced and reconfigured fruit labels provide information on which countries are allowed to export fruit to the United States and the often cornball efforts of manufacturers to provide catchy names for their products: *Luv'ya* (New Zealand apples), *Gee Whiz* (Granny Smith apples), *Ponyboy* (melons), *Pink Lady* (grapefruits). "The stickers," she explains, "become traces of the objects being consumed." Welty is the kind of conceptual artist whose concern with language never overwhelms her desire to make aesthetically elegant and often beautiful images. Hers is a well-informed merging of geometric abstraction with the readymade, balanced by a concern for the sociopolitical nature of consumption.

— FRANCINE KOSLOW MILLER