

# Food for thought

## "Food in Art" at Tacoma Community College

By [Alec Clayton](#) on February 1, 2018



"You'd Better Sit Down" collage by Miles Styer. Photo courtesy Tacoma Community College

An exhibition of art about food is a delightful concept -- lighthearted and lightweight. Most of the art in the "Food in Art" exhibition at Tacoma Community College consists of pop-style paintings of food, many of which are clever and funny, such as Diane Fairbanks' "Deception Pass Doughnut," a painting of a giant doughnut with chocolate icing floating down the river. There are others that are equally clever, but most are just still-life paintings of food with nothing in particular to brag about. There are exceptions, however, and the exceptions are worth bragging about. As for example, Dave Roholt's terrific watercolor "Ice Cream Climbers on Mount Cone," a floor-to-ceiling painting of many scoops of multi-flavored ice cream piled atop a single cone with mountain climbers with picks and ropes attempting to scale its height. The scroll-like painting is held top and bottom by plastic ice cream scoops. In addition to being a funny idea with a cute title, this piece is beautifully painted with loose drawing and paint application and delicate transparencies of many colors.

Lynette Charters has three paintings from her "Missing Woman" series in the show. These are appropriations of master paintings of women painted on wood panels with such materials as plaster and paint and applied candy wrappers. The candy wrappers are a subtle reference to food, and there are food items to be seen in the settings. What makes them startling and unique is that only the settings and some of the clothing are painted; the women's figures are the bare wood underneath with knotholes for eyes and nipples. The whole concept is a powerful commentary, beautifully executed, of how women are simultaneously objectified and overlooked.

Another excellent piece is Irene Osborn's little ceramic sculpture, "Mother's Day." In unglazed clay she depicts a mother sitting on the toilet in a public bathroom stall nursing a baby. Slabs of gray clay for the open-door stall and earth-colored clay for the figures lend a stark and sad feeling to the piece, which by my interpretation shouts out volumes about how women are shamed and hidden away when feeding their infants.

Another piece with strong political commentary is "50 Billion Hamburgers" by Janette Otis. This is a small sculpture of a white slab wheel upon which are chained lines of black cows, headless, lying on their backs with their feet in the air. There is no actual movement, but the implied movement is a turning of the wheel to dump the carcasses into a grinder. Enjoy your hamburger.

One of the loveliest drawings is Judith A. Jorg's "Tea Bag Rain," a colored pencil drawing of many-colored teabags on Parchment-colored paper all lined up at the same angle to reflect the look of raindrops. It has the same kind of delicacy and skill of drawing as Roholt's ice cream climbers.

I like Sharon Styer's collage, "The Last Binge." It is a reproduction of a Last Supper painting by Northern Renaissance painter Dieric Bouts the Elder. The supper is surrounded by a field of brown and gray rocks. The simple juxtaposition of the old painting with rocks that look like beans is startling and funny.

Also startling and funny is Miles Styer's collage, "You'd Better Sit Down." It's the Sunbeam Bread girl with her blonde hair and chubby cheeks and sweet little blue hair bow cannibalizing men and women from a bowl of tomato soup. The Styers are mother and son, and sick humor seems to run in the family.

As with most large group shows, this one is uneven in quality, but there's enough good in it to make it well worth seeing.

**"FOOD IN ART,"** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday, open until 8 p.m. Third Thursday, through March 16, Tacoma Community College, Building 5A, entrance off S. 12th St. between Pearl and Mildred, Tacoma, visitor parking in Lot G, [tacomacc.edu](http://tacomacc.edu)

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