

EAT

By Michal Finegold

An alternate telling of the story of Eve and the forbidden fruit



This piece explores common attitudes in Western culture toward food and desire, and the pervasive fear of sensuality, particularly female sensuality. An exceptionally fitting allegory is the story of Eve and the forbidden fruit. In this animation, my altered version of the biblical story challenges the notion that wanting is sinful, and that resisting or fighting perfectly normal human needs is of moral value in and of itself. These needs may be hunger for food, or they may be other things as well, such as sexual desire, according to a common interpretation of the biblical story in question.

The piece also touches on the theme of body image, and presents an alternative image of the female form, rather than the commonly idealized extremely thin body. This alternative image is actually more representative of the average Western woman, but is far from the cultural ideal.

In decades and centuries past, and – in some cultures – to this very day, women were (are) expected to deny themselves any form of sexual gratification. Lust itself is sinful, so women must not only deny perfectly natural desires, but better yet, not have those desires in the first place. These days, in many circles, it is not so fashionable to be a prude when it comes to sex, nor is it in fashion to force certain morals on free citizens. However, in many ways, food has become the new sex, and health has become the new morality. Touting health as an excuse, increasingly slim (and, for most people, unhealthy) ideals are imposed on modern women. Today's parents guard their daughters' weight as vigilantly as yesterday's parents guarded their daughters' virginity. And the diet culture is not only about how we are supposed to look, but about how we are supposed to think. If we eat, we must feel duly guilty about every morsel. We must repent for "bad" foods in the same way some moral codes require we repent for any form of sex deemed unsuitable. We must always be in control of our desires, able to deny ourselves. We are constantly afraid of our own bodies. Which begs the question: Why?

The piece opens with a verse from the bible, and ends with a paraphrase of an earlier verse. In my version, rather than starting out pure and learning shame from the tree of knowledge, Eve starts out afraid and conflicted, and learns self acceptance, self love. Along the way we see her struggle; we even see a sort of apparition – the manifestation of an inner voice holding her back. But in the end, all the fear was for nothing. The seeds that fall around her – seeds of change perhaps – celebrate with her, and she no longer feels the need to try and hide her body.

Too many of us tell ourselves that our normal, natural desires are "sinful", "unhealthy", or "wrong", and that our natural body shapes – whatever they happen to be for each of us – are unacceptable. By doing so, we are setting an impossible trap for ourselves. We can never win, we will always fail, because we have decided that by definition, what we want and need is wrong, and what we are is not okay.

Perhaps it is time to realize: Eating is not a moral failure, nor is having any particular body type, or loving whomever we love, or just being whoever we happen to be.

On the technical side: Both 3D and 2D techniques are used, including hand painted elements, cut-out animation, dynamic hair systems, and so on. Software used: Autodesk Maya, Pixologic ZBrush, Adobe After Effects, Adobe Photoshop.