

ICE-CONIC

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE GALLERY ON THE GREEN EXHIBITION

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BY

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The ice cream cone, with its geometry and functionality has its origins in the early 20th century, the machine age, the era of art deco and seaside holidays for the masses. The huge advertising cones are, in our minds, a feature of fifties-style seaside kitsch which has in recent years been dubbed 'vintage' and acquired a modicum of 'cool'.

The almost person-sized cones which stand outside seafront shops are strong sculptural forms, this has been exploited in the 'high art' of Claus Oldenberg and Coosje Van Brugen. In 'Dropped Cone' (Cologne 2001) the traditional large shop front cone has been inverted and 'dropped' on the corner of a building. In the artists words the work represents a "cornucopia of consumerism" and a "sign of transience."

The reproduction ice cream cone, a powerful symbol, evokes nostalgia. As Laura B Weiss points out:

"One of the measures of ice cream's potent appeal is how the mere sight of the sweet, frozen confection immediately taps into memories of carefree childhood idylls, not to mention the innocence of simpler times." (1)

This exhibition of photographs investigates with humour and knowingness the iconic ice cream cone. These signs that act like magnets for children and evoke nostalgia for childhood treats in adults are shown to us in their contexts competing with other loud advertising hoardings, goods for sale and the colourful paraphernalia of day

tripping pleasures. This is where we can see the strength of the form and its unrelenting supremacy over the other signs. We also see the cone ironically isolated and, complete with its calorie laden chocolate flake, juxtaposed with a mannequin in a 'keep fit' pose, a subtle reminder of what the 'cornucopia of consumerism' has brought us.

The images play on notions of taste, literally, the variety of toppings and the formal arrangements of the sauce or the flake, and the gallery-like shop window, act to make us reconsider both the aesthetics of a commonly seen object and what these signs can mean.

(1) Laura B Weiss Ice Cream: A global history Reaktion Books London 201 P8.