

Petits Fours / La Petite Mort : Edible Effigies For The Modern Mourner

A *petit four* (French; literal translation "small oven") is a miniature confection generally eaten at the end of a meal or served as part of dessert. They are part of a lineage of *haute cuisine*, co-opted in the United States by the American *bourgeoise* as a culinary delicacy. *Petits fours* were traditionally made during the cooling process of coal-powered, brick ovens in the 18th century. This was due to the high burning temperature of coal, relative to wood, and its expense at the time. Wasting the heat produced was not an option. Thus, the action of production became as much about the state of economy and industry as it was about the food itself and the role it played in the larger scheme of the meal at hand.

"Small oven" conjures images of the mouth, of digestive canals, of that which is baked or is burned – either in resistance, remembrance, celebration, or in effigy. In *Petits Fours / La Petite Mort*, the artist Legacy Russell will produce several hundred of these small treats; each one will be personalized with a name of an individual life lost on September 11th, 2001. Each will act as an edible tombstone, calling into play the relational histories of food, death, and mourning, but also of food and sex (*La Petite Mort*, French for "the little death", is a metaphor for orgasm).

Theorists, artists, writers, and scientific thinkers across centuries have mused about the connection between the orgasm as both a literal and figurative release of the spirit. The act of eating appears in a multitude of theistic practices, both traditional and alternative alike. Within Catholic practice, according to the New Testament, Jesus gave at his Last Supper his disciples bread, saying, "This is my body", and wine, saying, "This is my blood"; this has become part of the ritual of "taking the Eucharist", otherwise known as Holy Communion.

Engaging in a public rite of mourning and remembrance, the artist will offer passersby the opportunity to eat, reflect upon, and pay homage to those who perished, focusing on the individuals lost and the histories therein, rather than the omnipresent symbol of the Towers themselves.

Will be served with a small cup of red wine.

What makes an "edible effigy"?!

Almonds. Butter. Sugar. Vanilla extract. Salt. Eggs. Flour. Rum. Raspberry jam.

*For more information about artist **Legacy Russell**, please visit www.legacyrussell.com.*

This project is presented as part of the artist's year-long exploration of mourning and remembrance,

*titled **OPEN CEREMONY** and presented by Trust Art.*