

ARTnews

SUMMER 2006

Mika Rottenberg

Nicole Klagsbrun

Reduced to its lowest common denominator, life is an endless cycle of consumption and excretion, and the work that puts bread on the table is often equally repetitious. For her captivating video *Dough* (2005–6), Mika Rottenberg put a quartet of female laborers to work in an absurd contraption that allegorical combines digestion and drudgery.

Inside the top story of a three-level plywood structure, an obese woman who barely fits inside her cubicle guides a coiled mass of dough through a hole in the floor. Below, an extremely thin woman guides it down a conveyer belt. One section of dough after another then drops to the lowest level, where it is vacuum packed in plastic. At intervals the thin woman reaches into a tiny crawl space to tend an indoor garden of dahlias. Meanwhile the fat woman rests, alternately sniffing on a dahlia bouquet and puffing on an asthma inhaler. Tears produced by her allergic reaction to the flowers drip down her leg and through a hole in the floor, falling onto a heated tile and sizzling into nothingness. Eventually, the whole process begins again.

A pair of rooms constructed within the front gallery echoed *Dough's* factory setting with mismatched linoleum floor tiles and cheap drop ceilings. Here, Rottenberg's video played in a small plywood cubbyhole, where cramped viewers symbolically took part in her assembly line, observing the production of tears and sweat-seasoned dough and perhaps pondering analogous processes in their own lives.

In the back gallery were large drawings featuring multidimensional universes where crouching humans, hairy dentures, red-tipped carrots, piles of apples, and potted plants eat, grow, vomit, and die. Cartoon diagrams of the digestion process, they added a touch of whimsy to an already pungent show.



Mika Rottenberg, *Dough*, 2005–6,
single-channel video sculpture, dimensions variable.
Nicole Klagsbrun.

—Elisabeth Kley