

The Boston Globe

December 1, 2010

GALLERIES

Getting back to the garden

Exhibit offers fresh bite of forbidden fruit

Cate McQuaid

The apple is an age-old reference to the biblical tree of knowledge. It's also the logo for a powerhouse computer and consumer electronics company, and there are scores of other associations with the fruit. Triiibe — the collective composed of identical triplet performance artists Alicia, Kelly, and Sara Casilio and photographer Cary Wolinsky — has a witty, luscious exhibit, "In Search of Eden: A Work in Progress," at Boston University's 808 Gallery with apples as its driving metaphor.

The show comes in two parts. First, several photographic triptychs have been set up behind opened black curtains in the gallery's generous windows. They are trademark Triiibe images: The Casilios appear in richly designed narratives as different characters with identical faces, a conceit that tickles and prods our perceptions and beliefs about personal identity.

In this case, the triptychs are set up as altarpieces. With their bright tones and peaked frames, they make the gallery's windows look almost like stained glass. Each piece is titled with the name of an apple. "McIntosh"



marries the tree of knowledge motif with the digital age reference: The women, wrapped in computer cables, form an apple tree. Most of the pieces here hold a tension between the dream of a utopia and its disappointing achievement — such as ensnaring people in the very wires they use to connect with each other.

"Royal Gala" reprises van Gogh's "The Potato Eaters," with the Casilios in rough work clothes gathered around a table, eating fries out of fast food containers. Some of these works stretch the apple motif too thin, but the images are so dramatic and weird, and often rife with other references, it doesn't matter.

I visited the gallery on a day when the second component was not up and running: Triiibe is attempting to create a public living room. The floor is scattered with low wooden tables and places to sit. Visitors can lounge, chat, and munch on apples as the triplets paint the interior of a room constructed within the gallery. Ultimately, through painterly optical illusion, the squarish room will look like a dome from within. The trompe l'oeil project seems disconnected thematically from the exhibit, just a project to entertain the artists while they entertain visitors. But the living room is in keeping with the spirit of community with which the Casilios and Wolinsky foster their collective. That can be seen as their own search for Eden — still, indeed, a work in progress.