

BLACK BOOK



CHEESE, FISH, & CANDY

Artist Cosimo Cavallaro redefines his media (and his diet). “The chair is a representation of man,” says multimedia artist Cosimo Cavallaro. “No other animal sits like we do. To sit down is a perversion. People sit in meetings, sit while they watch television, sit when they’re shitting. You become complacent when you sit, disconnected.” So Cavallaro—a classically trained artist who at 37 has works in museums worldwide—decided to drizzle melted mozzarella, cheddar, and blue cheese over his father’s favorite armchair.

After the dairy chair, he painted curlicues of Nabisco EZ Cheese on 60s fashion icon Twiggy (above) as she modeled something furry by Chanel. This spring, Cavallaro flung 1,000 pounds of white-wine fondue cheeses—Swiss Emmentaler, Gruyère, and appenzeller—all over room 114 of New York’s Washington Jefferson Hotel. Over the course of five days he microwaved the shredded cheeses and spattered them Pollock-like over the linens, the nightstands, and the hangers.

Jet hair, jet beard, dark eyes, Cavallaro speaks and works in metaphor. Whatever his secondary medium may be. And most of his art actually has nothing to do with dairy products. Though the Canadian-born artist has won numerous awards for his video and commercial work, since moving to New York in 1995 he’s concentrated on painting, taking photographs, and continually redefining his media.

This summer he’s orchestrating an event at a London airport (he’s negotiating with officials at Heathrow and Gatwick) where 1,000 fish will spill out of a luggage carousel. And he’s crafting a line of hard-candy furniture, based on chair designs from the ’30s and ’40s, that will likely go on view at a New York museum this fall. For the furniture, Cavallaro takes his confection out of the oven while hot, allowing it to pull like taffy. Dali in corn syrup.

“Art is whatever you can be passionate about. The key is to walk away knowing that you were really there,” he says. “It’s like being a kid, going back to finding a sense of balance. When do you stop?” —Shonquis Moreno

Cosimo Cavallaro’s fish baggage spills into London this summer. For more information, call 212.473.1500.