Introduction

At the inauguration of the 1990 exhibition *Computers di Luciano Fabro, caramelle di Nadezda Mandel'stam* (Luciano Fabro's *Computers*, Nadezhda Mandelstam's *Candies*) in Milan, students handed out sweets wrapped in photocopy paper (Plate 7.1 and Plate 7.2).[1]

Without much apparent consideration, the visitors unwrapped the treats and popped them into their mouths, only to discover that the open "wrappers" in their hands contained thought-provoking phrases from the memoirs of Russian writer Nadezhda Mandelstam (Plate 7.2). Suddenly, the straightforward distribution and consumption of candy became an encouragement to visitors to reflect upon the relationship of the artist Luciano Fabro to the author of the phrases and the wider message behind the event.

Nadezhda (1899–1980), whose name means "hope," was the wife of Osip Mandelstam (1891–1938), the exiled Russian poet who died in transit to a Siberian gulag for having written a poem critical of Joseph Stalin. Nadezhda was not able to write down her memories of their experiences under the regime until after Stalin's death decades later in 1953. Her manuscript, titled "Hope against Hope," was smuggled into the United States in the 1950s and published in English in 1970.[2]

Nadezhda had preserved the events in her mind for decades; she similarly saved her husband's poems, officially ordered to be destroyed, from oblivion by memorizing them and by hiding fragments of his verses on scraps of paper between pots and pans. Fabro would evoke these written fragments with the phrases printed on the candy wrappers for the 1990 exhibition. Thus, the viewer's act of eating the candies and reading her phrases in which the treats came wrapped seemed to replicate Nadezhda's symbolic gesture of recalling the events and "ingesting" her husband's poems as a form of safeguarding.

But the artist had the idea to hand out the wrapped candy after reading an unsettling passage in Nadezhda's memoir of a gesture that symbolized an act of willful opposition to assimilation: the writer recalled the candies that Stalin's police cynically offered her while searching the couple's apartment. Although she did not write this in her memoirs, it is clear that Nadezhda either refused to take these candies or else ate them because she had no choice, in both cases implying a form of quiet resistance. She wrote, "this gesture of offering hard candy was repeated in many other apartments during searches. Was this, too, part of the ritual, like the technique of entering the room, checking identity papers, frisking people for weapons and looking for secret drawers?"[3] Rather than inspiring a positive memory, the sweets represented a terrible moment in Nadezhda's mind—police searching the apartment, instruments of a totalitarian state that exiled millions to prison camps offering candy as they were overturning the couple's lives. Her story exemplifies the dramatic contradictions of the Stalinist dictatorship, one notoriously fraught with surreal incongruities. By handing out candies in his exhibition and wrapping them in Nadezhda's words, Fabro delicately rephrased Nadezhda's negative, painful memory in a new and hopeful way.

Fabro used the candies as an index, or what he himself called a "citation," creating an anecdote behind which other things lurk.[4] He saw it as "a way to reflect on relationships between people, on the State and people, even on hygienic forms of the State. It is something very simple that suddenly becomes rich with memory. And at the same time it is something that permits [me] to impress in peoples' memories the words of Nadezda Mandelstam."[5] By sharing Nadezhda's memory of the candies, Fabro even drew a political parallel with the manipulation of culture in the present day: "[Nadezda] . . . says that . . . what happened under Stalin's regime was nothing more than a small experiment in a small space for what happens today in the world. In . . . less dramatic and more diluted ways we are now living what the Soviet Union had lived. As Ossip said, the State has become a non-religious State, only engaged with culture as something to be exploited."[6]

The following essay examines the functions of "Nadezda Mandelstam's candies" within both Fabro's 1990 installation and his broader artistic project. I argue that while the candies initially elicited an innocent, direct response from the visitor, they also raised significant questions about censorship and protest in a society of fear. Furthermore, they encouraged the visitor to consider other important issues, among them the relationships between mass-produced and handmade objects, language and poetry, art and heroism, consumption and preservation as well as memory and honor. Finally, the candies were intended to stimulate reflection on the challenge of employing judgment when the sense of taste is engaged, especially given that the confectionary evoked a memory from Nadezhda's life that was anything but sweet.

Etymologies, Monuments, and "Computers"

Luciano Fabro, who was loosely associated with the Italian Arte Povera movement, presented his message-laden candies twice in 1990, once at the Christian Stein gallery in Milan and again at the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels.[7] In Milan, they were incorporated into a larger exhibition and became comprehensible only in relation to three additional works of art titled *AR*, *Nadezda*, and *Computers*. In Brussels, however, Fabro eliminated the other works and only distributed the candies. In both shows the process of unwrapping and eating the candies was immediate but that of understanding the gesture was gradual: Fabro engaged art students to explain the idea and also gave several extensive interviews to critics.[8] These accounts were thus documented in published texts, videotaped discussions, and exhibition reviews. In the exhibition at the Stein gallery, visitors first encountered two enormous capital letters "AR" at the center of a wall. Each letter was more than one and a half meters high and made from sheer cotton sheets of

fabric; together they presided over the space and subtly referenced the subject of the exhibition (Plate 7.3).

Fabro's choice of these letters elicited numerous explanations, from the etymological to the personal to the symbolic. First, "-ar" is a common ancient Sanskrit root from the Proto-Indo-European origin of language that means "to fit together" or "to assemble skillfully."[9] Indeed, this task was alluded to by the interconnected but disparate artworks in the exhibition. Second, "-ar" survives in Latin and Italian words relating to art, artifice, skill, and craft (rooted in the Latin word *ars*). In its central isolated position up on the wall, *AR* seemed to echo the nineteenth-century notion of "*Ars gratia artis*," a declaration of art's autonomy from moral or political purpose, one consonant with the same kinds of claims for artistic independence that were made by Arte Povera critic Germano Celant and especially Luciano Fabro from 1968. (Recent scholarship, however, has challenged this position by pointing to Arte Povera's political nuances as found especially in the works of Piero Gilardi and some of the art made by Jannis Kounellis and Mario Merz.)[10] Third, "-ar" is preserved in words for body parts such as limbs (*arti*), as well as those related to organization such as "articulate," "order," and "coordination." In several senses, then, *AR* suggested the presence of a shaping principle for art.

In 1991 Fabro's biographer Jole de Sanna offered an alternative interpretation, asserting that the declarative letters emerged as the artist's personal response to the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, after which he had mourned the end of nature and the death of "form in art."[11] In interviews in 1990, Fabro described his renewed hope that art could continue to exist first by returning to an organizing root concept of human activity. As De Sanna argued, Fabro began again by searching for an "attitude" toward art that preceded form, or was beyond form and superficial identity. De Sanna thus drew a parallel between Fabro's post-Chernobyl desire to create art and Nadezhda's powerful act of saving her husband's poetry through memory without leaving a material trace, since any act of writing the poems down on paper would have been too politically dangerous. Indeed, Fabro's idea of handing out the candies directly referred to Nadezhda's approach: her willful, metaphorical "ingestion" of the poems by taking them into her mind, although he added to it a bodily, sensorial absorption.

De Sanna further likened Fabro's sense of "attitude" to the conceptual "root" or organizing principle that precedes art making of any kind, suggesting that form began to emerge again in a primitive way, through the Sanskrit letters AR. Another nascent sign of the return of form in his art was the artist's choice to hand out ephemeral candies at the exhibition opening: objects that exist only ephemerally before disappearing into the body through ingestion, but that also leave a lasting impression through the aftereffects of taste. Just as Fabro's distribution of the candies became a nurturing, healing, creative gesture following disaster and trauma, the viewer's act of eating them could become a hopeful mode of assimilation.

Fabro further emphasized themes of survival and continuity by forming *AR* out of light cotton sheets taken from another piece called *Rorschach Inkblots* of 1980.[12] His reference to an earlier work secured it within the artist's own genealogical trajectory—looking backward and forward, the new work extended an older one as the artist reshaped it rather than creating ex-novo by moving on to an entirely new idea. Staging his notion of memory and identity through historical continuity, Fabro thus regenerated from within—other Fabro works, such as the hollowed out egg, *Io* (I, 1978), also address this notion of self-renewal through a universally recognized image of origins, the egg. He revivified his own work, casting the past as part of a continuous experience, a metaphor for his vision of art history in opposition to what he saw as a prevailing and dangerous cultural amnesia.

In the first work, creatively reworking Hermann Rorschach's 1921 diagnostic test, the artist alluded to imaginative subjectivity as another organizing principle of art, to the value of psychological associations and projective tendencies. Thus, he aligned his work with image-based consciousness and the power of individual perception. The red paint on *AR* can also be associated with the most primitive origins of visual expression: red, the color of blood, suggests the most basic experiences of life and death; it was also the first color, along with ochre, to be used in drawings on prehistoric caves. In a similar vein, the same year as *Rorschach's Inkblots*, Fabro had also commemorated Osip Mandelstam in a work called *Iconografia*, a mixed-media installation dedicated to historical figures and in which violence to their bodies corresponded with violence to their ideas. The second work in the show at the Stein

gallery, titled *Nadezda*, was propped against the wall adjacent to *AR*: an enormous sculpted fragment of gray *bardiglio* marble with two polished front planes cut at a right angle, while the back was left rough and unworked (Plate 7.4).

The two different kinds of surface united natural and human artifice. Where the planes met, the artist crafted a hollowed-out central ridge with an elongated pyramid using the pieces left from carving the block, then placed it back inside the work, signaling a sharp separation from the original marble source that was subsequently restored—as if it were a distinct but reconnected limb. The entire piece was held together and upright from above, as if in traction, by a noose-like knotted device on a beam made from the kind of canvas belt adopted by marble workers to transport stone.

At the base of the stone Fabro placed a paperback with a woman's face on the cover, which turned out to be a copy of the 1971 Italian translation of Nadezhda's memoirs. The physical, spatial, and intellectual relationship between stone and book was unclear, however. Nadezhda's book seemed almost to be holding up the massive stone—or was Fabro's heavy marble object in fact protecting the memoirs?[13] The artist's iconic stone, book, and belt, combining text and image, together represented an innovative contemporary monument. It reshaped the traditional monument's authoritative, masculine language and minimalism's virile physical prowess in veneration of a heroic female subject. Here Fabro honored "the effort of silence and the power of uncensorable words,"[14] memorializing Nadezhda's courage in protecting her husband's art and memories from censorship and the inner strength of a single individual against an annihilating authoritarian state.[15] He thus shared Nadezhda's investment in memory and history as embodied in the human utterance, viewing her words and actions as signs of hope in a manner befitting her name. In interviews, he maintained that the monument embodied *oralità*, "that fundamental node of expression that finds form even when it cannot make itself visible." He called it "a writing without a body in which everything is enclosed in the person . . . in one's capacity to cultivate a desire for form. [A] person can be killed but this internal *oralità* survives."[16] This reading, in which form is preserved even when not visible, apparently contradicts Fabro's interviews of the same period

with De Sanna, who described the artist's advocacy for an art that transcended form. However, here Fabro revealed that his desire for form appeared even at the moment in which he distanced himself from it, demonstrating his sense of form as an essential, enduring, if ambivalent and continually problematic component of art, especially in modern times. Six flimsy metalworks called *Computers* completed the show. They were hung throughout the space and decorated with whimsical multicolored metal rods in a manner that only served to emphasize their apparent instability (Plate 7.5).

The *Computers* conjured ideas about data input, memory, and information preservation, concepts related to Nadezhda's memoirs, which offered the interpretative key to the show. For art critic and curator Elena Pontiggia, the *Computers* contrasted with the paperback as "empty frames, books without pages."[17] But Francesca Pasini, another art critic and curator, quoting Fabro, found that "the mobile junctures 'find their own form.'"[18] Thus, yet again, Fabro broached the question of form, but now from another angle: that of the artwork's own capacity for a self-determining principle (rather than the artist's forceful regeneration of art). Indeed, each computer shaped its own organization and equilibrium based on weight distribution and position, signaling that the artist used the entire installation to play with literal and metaphorical questions of lightness and heaviness as well as of emptiness and fullness.

The Candies, Revisited

To emphasize Nadezhda's words, Fabro distributed the sweets wrapped in sentences from her book.[19] Indeed, the entire exhibition is dedicated to her, rather than to Osip. Given the complex meanings of the other works in the show, it becomes clear that the candies were intended to evoke more than merely the act of eating (Plate 7.6).

On a most basic level, ancient rituals cast sweets as propitiatory gifts offered to gods on religious occasions. Even today, sweets called *confetti* are distributed as signs of celebration, hope, and good luck at Italian weddings and baptisms. But Fabro also envisioned the candies as a direct, simple mode of testimony that might allow the visitor to ingest the messages through taste, referencing Nadezhda's efforts to

preserve her husband's legacy and replicating the way she had savored and memorized his poetry, a gesture that might be furthered through any participant's future engagement with the works of either the writer or the artist. In an act of hope, the artist entrusted the public to take part in this task.

The question of form continued to preoccupy Fabro on another level, for his candy project can be seen as a work of art that cannot be bought or sold. In this respect it reflects the call of Germano Celant, author of the 1967 manifesto "Arte Povera: Notes for a Guerilla Warfare," for the dematerialization of art and for artistic "actions" that could combat commodification and suggest avenues for artistic freedom in a capitalist society.[20] By 1990, however, ephemeral art was already widely part of the artistic vocabulary but could still be sold (through documentation, for example). Thus, despite the chronological distance between this exhibition and the early Arte Povera shows, the problem of the commodification of art when given lasting form persisted in the artist's mind. Indeed, Fabro's reflection on old and new forms of memory and data preservation occurred in 1990, a year in which all kinds of new technological devices began to be more prevalent in Italy and elsewhere, among them the portable computer, the cell phone, and the fax machine, and the beginnings of public use of the Internet. As art historian and curator Veronique Goudinoux asked in connection with Fabro's *Nadezda*: "How—and the question is not only valid for artists—can we resist the 'designer method' today, refusing to become suppliers of 'objects' of all kinds when our society seems to find no other solution to the crisis other than unlimited economic growth? The teachings of Luciano Fabro, who through his work makes us reflect on both individual dignity and the future of our world, are undoubtably [*sic*] precious."[21]

Although Goudinoux does not elaborate on Fabro's "teachings" in her essay, her allusion to this particular exhibition as a critique of consumerist society can lead us to compare Fabro's candies to two other key instances of "eating" in the global history of edible postwar art and in which the question of consumption takes center stage. For the candy distribution here echoes both a 1960 exhibition by Fabro's contemporary, Piero Manzoni, and prefigures Cuban American artist Felix Gonzalez-Torres's signature "candy spills" begun in 1990, the same year

of Fabro's show.[22] On July 21, 1960, at the Galleria Azimuth (founded by Manzoni and his friends) on Via Clerici 12 in Milan, Manzoni created a satirical edible performance titled "*Consumazione dell'arte dinamica del pubblico divorare l'arte*" (The Consumption of Dynamic Art by the Public to Devour Art), which was first exhibited in Copenhagen a month earlier.[23] He boiled and then signed a number of eggs, marking each one with his own unique thumbprint, offering them to visitors to eat and devouring an egg himself. Like Fabro's later conceptual gesture, Manzoni's act consecrated unmediated, corporeal contact between the visitor and the artist's hand in what Manzoni himself described as "a direct communion" of the "consecrated" eggs with the "personality of the artist."[24] As Giorgio Zanchetti and others have noted, the artist saw this as a mockery of the Catholic ritual of the Eucharist.[25] At the same time, Manzoni's tongue-in-cheek title suggests that he conflated this religious rite with modern art, with the artist performing as its pseudo-priest. Manzoni established public participation by persuading visitors to ingest (and thus become part of) the artwork. Yet he also literalized and poked fun at the "devouring" role of the viewer as starved consumer in relation to art, with the banal boiled egg *cum* unique, irreplaceable art object in the position both of protagonist and sacrificial victim. As Jacopo Galimberti noted, this early example of a European "Happening" was a "demystification of the illusions surrounding the desire for a new relationship with the public."[26]

Manzoni's jesting title and performance commented ironically on postwar consumerism's perceived destruction of art, which disappears and loses value as it is gobbled up. By eating an egg himself, the artist theatrically absorbed the "artwork" back into his own body. He also symbolically averted art's exploitation by the outside world through (self-)ingestion. Yet Manzoni effectively subverted this element of the seventy-minute performance when he called director Gian Paolo Maccentelli of Filmgiornale Sedi to record a version of the performance in the film studio a few days before the opening of the gallery show. This film is now lost, but second and third filmings of the performance by Maccentelli and photographed by Giuseppe Bellone have survived, thus allowing the ephemeral event to be repeated for future audiences.[27] And while the artistic ritual involved consumption, Manzoni had also signed and handed out eggs as artworks in cotton-lined boxes

in the Copenhagen show. (Many of these have survived in museums and private collections, posing vexing conservation issues.)

Fabro was likely inspired by Manzoni's project. In 1977 he elaborated on Manzoni's performance in a work called *Tu*: an egg filled with inedible sealing wax, preserving the egg's form and recalling wax fruit, was exhibited dangling from the ceiling.[28] Fabro's 1990 candy distribution also recaptured the directness of Manzoni's edible eggs. But his concept differed from Manzoni's too; in 1960 Manzoni had claimed that art had no message left to offer and that the artwork no longer "existed," thereby demoting the public to the role of passive or uncritical spectator. Furthermore, Fabro mediated materially between himself and the visitors, protecting himself from direct contact with the "consuming" public envisioned by Manzoni by conveying his message via a monumental historical figure, her writings, and his tiny candies.

In the same year that Fabro installed his *Computers*, Felix Gonzalez-Torres would also begin to invoke the function of taste by producing candy "spills" for his audiences to deplete. These works, installed in many US and European museums over the years, related to the artist's use of other everyday materials such as lightbulbs and paper stacks. The candy installations were presented in ever-changing forms, volumes, and types: piled up in a corner or spread out like a carpet, wrapped in silver, gold, multicolored, or black wrappers. In taking the candy, visitors affected the fluid, unstable form of the work. The artist claimed he envisioned this as a metaphor for life's constant flux, as well as for death. At the same time, museum and gallery workers were instructed to continuously replenish the candies, an act suggesting the possibility of regeneration.

Some versions of the "spills" were conceived as portraits: one even marked the tragic loss of the artist's lover, Ross Laycock, to AIDS, with the quantity of candies calibrated to Laycock's "ideal" weight when healthy. This gave the works personal and political resonance, from the death of Laycock to the disappearance of the gay community as it succumbed to AIDS. Indeed, emotionally charged candy "spills" named *Untitled (Placebo)*, shown in 1991 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, recalled the AIDS medication that failed to save Laycock's life. Visitors could eat Gonzalez-Torres's candy, although the diminishing quantity reflected an unsettling detail: Laycock's weight loss

and suffering prior to his death. This process of eating poses conservation problems today, because the factory that produced the candy is now closed. It also speaks to the role of memory (and taste memory) found in both Gonzalez-Torres's and Fabro's work.

Fabro, Manzoni, and Gonzalez-Torres all used ephemeral matter —food—to exalt and subvert the value and durability of the art object. But Gonzalez-Torres's specification that the piles should be continuously replenished also gave the work and candy-eating ritual the illusion of everlasting life. As Randy Kennedy observed, the installations functioned on several levels: "candy as candy; as art object; as a questioning of art objects; as a metaphor for mortality and depletion in the age of AIDS; as a means for his art and ideas literally to be spread, like a virus—or maybe like joy—by everyone who took a piece."[29] As "eucharistic" as the work of Manzoni, Gonzalez-Torres's art was also read as a haunting reflection on 1990s consumerism: like a Walmart display, the candies were repeatedly replaced by an unseen hand. As curator Doryun Chong noted, "distributing information or oblique poetics, the series were, and are, an implicit critique of the art market, questioning the very notions of commodification and ownership."[30]

The Viewer and the Sweet

Like Manzoni and Gonzalez-Torres, Fabro conceptually elevated food above the levels of oral consumption and immediate pleasure. But he also raised the viewer's role to one of individual responsibility in caring for, preserving, and transmitting art and culture even in history's darkest, most repressive moments. His installation can conjure up in the viewer many different associations, an interpretive stance, which seems to be welcomed and encouraged by the Rorschach inkblot to which Fabro referred through *AR*: one such association might be with the "book people" in Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, who memorized literary masterpieces while the volumes were being burned, while another could be with the young Hafiz, who entrusted the Koran to memory. As in these diverse literary and religious examples, a visitor taking Fabro's candy therefore assumes a moral position, that of recreating Nadezhda's action for Osip in the face of censorship and on behalf of poetry, since she herself either resisted eating the candy or

ate it unwillingly but reported on the irony of the gesture many years later, as a witness to the horrors of the time. Yet some critics still read Fabro's gesture as a "modern form of communion."[31] This was not, however, intended as an act of faith in which the public "consumed" Nadezhda or Fabro, like the host and wine during mass, which symbolize the actual eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood. More an act of memory, it conceptually recalls symbolic foods such as those used to remember the flight of the Jews from Egypt in the Passover Seder meal.

The philosophical complexity of sweetness further supports this reading. Taste is the most direct and primitive of the five senses, but philosophers from Plato onward have ranked taste lowest in the hierarchy. The fine arts have been thought to "elevate the 'arts of the eyes and ears' above the activities of the bodily senses."[32] However, philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer argues that "tastes convey meaning and hence have a cognitive dimension that is often overlooked, [since] foods are employed in symbolic systems."[33] She counters the long-standing idea that taste is "too 'subjective' to admit rational deliberation, criterial assessment, or philosophical theorizing," noting taste's age-old association with the bodily, which, due to its relation to appetite, lumps it in the category of "the feminine."[34] She contends that taste is intimate (in contrast to vision or hearing, which require distance to be effective) and is thus the most primitive sense. Both inward and outward looking, "its mode of operation requires that objects become part of oneself. Its exercise requires risk and trust."[35]

Candy is a striking artistic form in Fabro's case, for although the artist himself never discussed this directly, candy also contains historical associations with childhood and innocence. According to anthropologist Sidney Mintz, sweet tastes are uniformly liked in every culture. They thus have a special position "in contrast to the more variable attitudes toward sour, salty, and bitter [. . .]."[36] Mintz confirms that, independent of socialization or acquired dispositions, the taste of sweet things is universally considered a basic sensory experience for mammals, especially human beings. Beginning with a baby's first taste of breast milk, sweetness is the nutritive basis for elemental sensory as well as affective relationships such as that between mother and child.[37] Not surprisingly, candy is used to entice children. Perhaps

Fabro's stated attempt to reawaken "innocence"[38] and pleasure echoes childhood, when consolation might be found in the guise of a sweet.[39]

On the one hand, Fabro's utilization of a medium like candy was intentionally trivial: "at the moment we take up an artistic activity, a reflection, an activity of responsibility with respect to art . . . we can always start again in an innocent way. With basic signs, elementary movements . . . ; from a worldly point of view . . . [we start] with an insignificant form, a situation of poverty, which cannot afford great elegance and must be as direct as possible."[40] Indeed, Fabro's plain paper-wrapped candies, which had no particular color, flavor, or shape, held none of the immediate aesthetic appeal of Gonzalez-Torres's carefully chosen, colorful shiny wrappers, flavors, or colors, nor were they arranged in sensually pleasing forms or plentiful piles. But while the candies themselves had none of the more obvious charms of those offered by Gonzalez-Torres, Fabro nonetheless ensured that they became effective vehicles of his message. To this end, he created a "Civil Service for Art" (a concept related to the "civil service" option allowed to conscientious objectors in the then-compulsory Italian military service) with young art students in Milan who had been instructed to hand out the candies to visitors, an approach he repeated with art students in Brussels. In order to preserve the work's didactic value, he also conducted a three-day seminar with Belgian art students, which was videotaped and shown to audiences while the students circulated the confections at the Palais des Beaux-Arts.

Fabro said he wanted the students' actions to present a "form of availability, a way to be witnesses to the person who remembers what is in the candy."[41] Here again, he emphasized the notion of "attitude." He said of his idea, "it does not matter much if they [the students] understood or not. It is a bit like the Benedictine monks, who did not understand what they were copying . . . but if today we make culture available, it is mostly thanks to men who made themselves available to copy culture, who had full faith in culture. They even copied things that maybe were in conflict with their moral, social, ideas."[42] Further, he added, "I told the young people to be available and maybe they would understand only later. Just like I was available to what Nadezda Mandelstam said."[43] And indeed, although the candies are now long forgotten, their memory has been preserved in other forms.

By contrast, Gonzalez-Torres left the visitor to take the candy without a human presence to authorize or physically offer it. Thus the giver remained reassuringly—or unsettlingly—invisible, and the act of touching and taking the candy felt transgressive, a subversion of accepted behavioral codes in an exhibition setting. Fabro's establishment of the responsibility for giving to selected individuals was an act of trust placed directly in the hands of future art makers. In the context of the old maternal adage not to take candy from a stranger, being clear about who was offering it was a critical part of the transaction. It also took into account the philosophical denigration of taste as the most unmediated and therefore unreliable and easily deceived of the five senses.[44]

In Fabro's work, the ambiguity of sweetness lies in the idea that it is meant both to entice and to set participants on guard. Mintz, who notes that the Indo-European root *swād* is the source of both "sweet" and "persuade,"[45] traces the links between sweetness and power, demonstrating how sugar was one of the first items transformed from luxury to necessity, and thereby from rarity to mass-produced good, a transformation embodying both the promise and the fulfillment of capitalism itself.[46] Indeed, it should be recalled that November 1989 was the date of the fall of the Berlin Wall. A year afterward the Soviet Union would end, and Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika had already unleashed sentiments against the soviets' censorship since the mid-1980s, in addition to ushering in consumerism to Communist countries. In this respect one might draw an associative parallel (although this is not one Fabro himself made) with the controversial 1974 Yugoslavian avant-garde film by director Dušan Makavejev, *Sweet Movie*, a political indictment of communism and consumerism in which a man and a woman shown making love in a sugar pile ends with the woman violently mauling her lover to death.[47] As Julien Suaudeau notes, "Makavejev tells us 'this is not sugar,' but a mirage of sweetness whose truth is in turn alienation (the consumer society) and a perverse and murderous ideological mystification (what the revolutionary ideal and the USSR became under Stalin)."[48] Fabro, too, raised questions about the deceptive nature of direct sensory perceptions such as taste, warning that sweetness can be a Trojan horse that distorts one's sense of judgment as one lowers one's guard. Agreeing to "eat" in a political sense risks obscuring necessary intellectual suspicion.

The Wrapper

If whether or not to eat the candy remains an open question in Fabro's work, as in Gonzalez-Torres's, what is left in the visitor's hand after consuming it is the paper wrapper printed with the artist's selection of Nadezhda's statements. Wrappers are yet another mode of mediation, modern forms of protection that keep candy safe from heat and moisture, preserving it from bacteria. They stall and stimulate appetite, instilling hopes of future pleasure. Like giftwrapping, they create anticipation and excitement. The rite of unwrapping, like erotic undressing, announces and prefigures the satisfaction to come.

It is useful to contrast the wrappers in Fabro's work with Manzoni's discarded eggshells and Gonzalez-Torres's "spills." In Gonzalez-Torres's installations, wrappers are chosen for their aesthetic appeal. Commercially made, they incorporate different candy brands and colors that contribute to the overall tone of each show: black licorice in torpedo-like forms wrapped in shiny black paper in one, multicolored and bright wrappers in another. Yet despite their visual weight, these wrappers have no intrinsic value once they have been removed from the artist's carefully constructed piles. After the candy is eaten they are probably thrown away. In Fabro's installation, on the contrary, the part of the product usually discarded as waste is what remains. In a true Arte Povera gesture, the wrapper is meant to be carefully preserved and appreciated, like the old cotton sheets of *AR* and the old artwork revitalized in it by Fabro. The handcrafted wrappers, recalling as they do Nadezhda's heroic efforts, enrich the sweets contained inside them. Through the wrapper, Fabro's work represents a restrained form of "eating" and cultural "replenishing" that attenuates Manzoni's frenetic egg devouring just as it mitigates Gonzalez-Torres's ephemeral gesture of depleting and refilling an apparently never-ending candy supply.

For Fabro, then, consumption functions paradoxically, to save rather than destroy identity, as the participant recognizes the candy's/poetry's/art object's inherent cultural value, calling for its memory to

be preserved. In linking the memorization of the poems to sweet candies, Fabro makes clear his sense of Nadezhda's role as container and defender of art. This act of sheltering has many mythical, literary, and religious parallels: it is comparable to the biblical *teba*, or Noah's Ark, the metaphorical vessel that protected vital forces until the disastrous flood subsided and people could safely come out again; or Rhea, the goddess of ancient Greek mythology, who wrapped up and hid baby Zeus in the mountains of Crete to save him from his violent father Cronos until he was strong enough to defend himself; as a form of bodily sheltering, it recalls the Egyptian goddess Nut, who took the sun into her body each night, releasing it back out to the world each morning. Significantly, in all these stories, as in Fabro's project, the vessel is envisioned as a feminine body that takes in the precious goods. However, it is "maternal" only in the broadest sense of a container, like Noah's Ark, rather than a literal woman's body. Ultimately, Fabro demonstrates that taste can trigger memories, which, in turn, generate a sense of history, which, in turn, can create containment: "I can identify with Nadjejda, like Nadjejda could identify with Mandelstam, like Mandelstam could identify with Dante, and Dante identified with Virgil."[49]

Conclusion

In sum, by using real food in an artistic context but devising ways to preserve the significance of the ephemeral gesture in the visitor's mind, Fabro sent a richly nuanced message to visitors about the ways in which art should be "ingested." The looming Sanksrit letters *AR* confirm his larger project, while the flimsiness of the computers in the installation playfully alludes to the inefficiency and impersonal nature of these machines as modern containers of human memory. At the same time the colorfulness and formal integrity and mechanical capacity of the computers suggest their value as catalysts for creativity. However, the candies here also warn us: even if something is sweet, even if one has a sweet tooth and one's appetite seems boundless, consume slowly, savor deliberately, sentence by sentence, artwork by artwork, each artwork in its various parts, discovering its components and relationships and being surprised by its flavor. At each

juncture, weigh significance, absorbing the forms and meanings in a Rorschach-like way that instills historical responsibility as well as a projective identification. Rely on the corporeal immediacy of taste, but restrain it with Platonic intellect and judgment, like the transport belt that keeps Fabro's enormous marble block from crushing Nadezhda's book. Take note of who is offering the candy, sense the tactility of the hand imparting it and the hand delivering it to one's mouth. Enjoy and recall the flavor after "eating" is finished. And finally, conserve the parts one would normally discard: though seemingly superfluous, these elements contain and protect, conveying the work's message. Each component of the project, the transport belt, the wrappers, and even Nadezhda herself, holds, in a different way, something precious. We are thereby entrusted to approach art with similar care and reverence.

Appendix[50]
by Silvia Fabro
(Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro, Milan)

Luciano Fabro, *Nadezda*, 1990

Total height: 237 cm. (the work can be attached at varying heights)

Small element: 125 x 16 cm.

Total weight: circa 1500 kg.

Bardiglio marble + book: Nadezda Mandel'stam, *Hope against Hope* (1970–1973) + transport belt (the book exhibited is the edition in the language of the country in which the work is exhibited).

The work is sculpted in a fragment of Bardiglio marble that has been left rough on the backside and smoothed on the two front sides, which are cut at a right angle. The central edge has been hollowed out and inserted inside it is an elongated pyramid obtained by the operations of cutting and the grooves of the fragment. The top tip of the pyramid has been rounded off. The two marble parts of the sculpture are held tightly together by a canvas transport belt, which is the type used by marble workers and transporters, and attached to the ceiling. The height of the small pyramid, independent and mobile, is determined by

the thickness of the book, *Hope against Hope* by Nadezda Mandel'stam, upon which the work rests, weighing upon it (S. Fabro, 1990).

"*Nadezda*: I dedicate privileged shows to her, she represents the continuity of art, to which she dedicated herself. I dedicate myself to her the way she dedicated herself to her husband, the way he dedicated himself to the poetry of Dante, as Dante did with Virgil, Virgil with Homer, it is the affirmation of the aristocratic role, etc."[51]

> The first request that art makes is that art should continue. Like all things in nature, sometimes nature is not concerned with the survival of the individual; rather, it has the problem of maintaining . . .
>
> We need to understand the thoughts that lie at the root, the thoughts that feed artistic work. I found similar thoughts in Nadezda Mandel'stam's book, *Hope against Hope*.
>
> A short aside: artists always say the same things. The continuity of art is that of always saying the same things for the past ten thousand years and these are those things that are always renewing art.
>
> We need to relaunch, like throwing seeds, looking ahead, the work of this woman who tried to maintain a form of wisdom, in the same way as the Benedictines did while the Roman Empire was falling. They copied everything without understanding, without at times knowing what they copied, but they had the willingness to fulfill a civil service for art: that is our position. At times we need to do things before we understand them. A few Benedictines would have understood later, perhaps by learning only Latin and Greek, others did not but were satisfied all the same. There are many levels of participation.[52]

EXHIBITIONS

Personal Exhibition

Computers di Luciano Fabro, Caramelle di Nadežda Mandel' Štam, Galleria Christian Stein, Milan, October 11, 1990–January 12, 1991. (no cat.)

Collective Exhibition

Affinités Sélectives VII: Luciano Fabro e Michel Verjux, curated by Bernard Marcadé, Palais des Beaux-Arts, Bruxelles December 6, 1990–January 6, 1991. (Candies of Nadezda)

Work Has Appeared in the Following Personal Exhibitions

Luciano Fabro: Die Zeit: Werke 1963–1991, curated by Martin Schwander, Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Lucerne, September 28–December 1, 1991. Catalogue: *Luciano Fabro*, ed. Luciano Fabro and Martin Schwander (Basel: Wieser Verlag, 1991).

Luciano Fabro, a cura di John Caldwell, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, September 30–November 29, 1992. Catalogue: *Luciano Fabro* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1992).

Fabroniopera. Luciano Fabro, curated by Bruno Corà, Palazzo Fabroni, Pistoia, December 17, 1994–February 11, 1995. Catalogue: *Fabroniopera. Luciano Fabro*, ed. Bruno Corà (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1994).

Luciano Fabro (Habitat), curated by Catherine Grenier, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, October 8, 1996–January 6, 1997. Catalogue: *Luciano Fabro*, ed. Catherine Grenier (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1996).

Leaflet added to the catalogue: Luciano Fabro, *Vademecum*, Paris, October 1996.

Luciano Fabro, curated by João Fernandes with Silvia Fabro, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Palacio de Vélazquez del Parque del Retiro, Madrid, November 27, 2014–April 12, 2015. Catalogue: *Luciano Fabro*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid 2015.

PLATES 7.1 and 7.2: Opening of Luciano Fabro, *Computers di Luciano Fabro, caramelle di Nadezda Mandel'stam*, 1990, Christian Stein Gallery, Milan. *Photographs by Giovanni Ricci. Courtesy of Archivio Luciano and Carla Fabro, Milan.*

PLATE 7.3: Luciano Fabro, *Computers di Luciano Fabro, Caramelle di Nadezda Mandel'stam*, 1990, Christian Stein Gallery, Milan. *Photograph by Salvatore Licitra. Courtesy of Archivio Luciano and Carla Fabro, Milan.*

PLATE 7.4: Luciano Fabro, *Nadezda*, 1990. *Photograph by Salvatore Licitra. Courtesy Archivio Luciano and Carla Fabro, Milano.*

PLATE 7.5: Luciano Fabro, *Computers*, 1990. *Photography by Salvatore Licitra. Courtesy Archivio Luciano and Carla Fabro, Milano.*

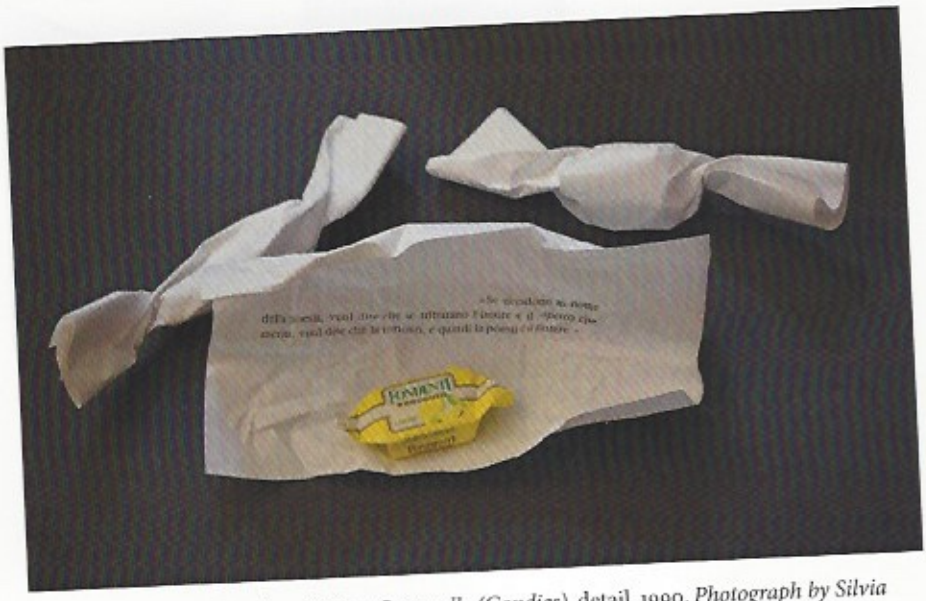

PLATE 7.6: Luciano Fabro, *Caramelle (Candies)*, detail, 1990. *Photograph by Silvia Fabro. Courtesy Archivio Luciano e Carla Fabro, Milano*