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Hosmer's bubble gum-pink porcelain pig teats are a reference to the pretty packaging that we Westerners place around our food as a way to distance ourselves from its origins.

Chinese Food Turned to Art

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and the primal building blocks of our world.

Hosmer, who has exhibited at the Museum of Fine Arts and New Mexico State Capitol as well as producing four large-scale public art commissions in China, is a

devotee of the Chinese markets and the country's vast rural landscape, which is populated by some 900 million people. She often takes excursions by bus into the mountains, where the contrast between city and country, she says, is like "traveling back through

time."

When she exhibited her recent installations in Xiamen, the response was "overwhelming," she says. "I think it was hard for the Chinese to understand why I chose these particular items. But they were very intrigued."

If you go

WHAT: Sculptural installations by Colette Hosmer.

WHEN: Opening reception 6-7 p.m. Saturday.

Members preview 5-6 p.m. On view through March 31.

WHERE: Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail.

CONTACT: 982-1338, www.ccasantafe.org.



Colette Hosmer's weekly purchases at Chinese food markets went back to her studio where they were molded and cast, then reproduced in porcelain, bronze and stone: familiar Chinese foodstuff sculpted of customary Chinese materials. These fish heads were carved from gray granite.

Food for Thought

Sculptor's work begins in the market stalls that sell ducks, fish, goat heads to consumers in China

BY DOTTIE INDYKE
For the Journal

In the markets of China, Colette Hosmer followed her nose and her eyes through the teeming masses and into the stalls of hanging chicken and duck carcasses. The sight of a tall white woman in their midst brought many Chinese shoppers to a standstill. Once she became a regular, however, they stockpiled the things she liked most — pig tails, eels, goat tongues and fish heads among them.

They did not know that Hosmer's visits were hardly a weekly grocery run. The exotic ingredients went back to her studio in the Chinese European Art Center in Xiamen where they were molded and cast, then reproduced in porcelain, bronze and stone: familiar Chinese foodstuff sculpted of customary Chinese materials.

Hosmer's installations, composed of bubble-gum pink pig teats and lacquer-like red bowls of eels, will be on view beginning tomorrow at the Center for Contemporary Arts. As always with Hosmer's work, there are sure to be those who shake their heads in disbelief that such disgusting items should be used in the service of art. Hosmer herself is at a loss to explain the attraction, but it is not a passing fancy.

Through more than a decade of art making she has constructed sculptures of bones, trout and snake skins. She has

assembled an entire table of food that combined molds and the real McCoys — pieces of pie filled with thousands of minnows, shrimp shells plumped up with silicon, a fabricated duck body with a genuine beak.

To her, the work is about life. Her father hunted birds, and as he cleaned his catch he'd point out the organs and the food the birds had consumed. The family ate every last bit of all he brought home. In China, where Hosmer has worked on six separate occasions since 2000, she finds the acceptance of the cycle of life and death refreshing.

"In Western cultures we seem to forget how seafood becomes food," she observes. "In these markets where I spent lots of hours I never once saw cruelty or sentimentality. The Chinese live very close to that fundamental cycle. It's a great reminder that we may put artificial layers between us and how life works on the planet, but I think it does us more good to be open to this."

Her latest work, with its high-gloss surfaces and shapely forms, is a reference to the pretty packaging that we Westerners place around our food as a way of distancing ourselves from its bloody origins. It is also an invitation for viewers to consider the intriguing beauty of nature

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Gallery Guide

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COURTESY THE CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS

Colette Hosmer's multiple glazed white porcelain casts of a goat head were among the works produced during a recent stint at the Chinese European Art Center in Xiamen, China.