

Lee Gainer's conceptual photographic series, *The Thought that Counts*, explores the culture of gift giving through 46 individual works. Using her considerable skills in photography and digital animation, Gainer manipulates images from gift catalogs featuring candy boxes, gift baskets, tea caddies, soaps, and other multiple arrangements. The end results show each display with the gifts missing, replaced by colorful silhouettes resembling cartoon thought bubbles.

Significantly, these bubbles are blank and underscore the artist's inquiry - what would happen if we didn't give gifts? Would anyone regret not getting the "Sophisticated Fruit and Cheese Ensemble"? How are we manipulated into buying gifts that have no real significance? Is there something beautiful in their absence?

Appropriately and perhaps unintentionally, Gainer has given the viewer a thoughtful gift with her highly refined, witty commentaries on the commercialization of gift exchange and our complex need to participate.

Joanne Bauer, Exhibitions Director
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