



LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS
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FALLEN FRUIT GOES GLOBAL

FALLEN FRUIT: *UNITED FRUIT*

June 17 – September 27, 2009

OPENING RECEPTION

June 16, 8pm - 10pm

featuring the participatory performance
Are You Happy To See Me?



Photo credit: Fallen Fruit

(May 19, 2009 Los Angeles, CA) – As the most popular fruit in the world, the banana is ubiquitous in daily life -- both as a food staple in grocery stores large and small as well as the supremely seductive fruit used in modern advertising and branding. At the same time the banana's history, politics and origins have remained virtually invisible due to the remoteness of where they are grown and of the people who grow them.

LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) is proud to present *United Fruit*, the first solo show by the artists collective **Fallen Fruit (David Burns, Matias Viegner and Austin Young)**, opening **Tuesday June 16, 2009** and running through **September 27, 2009**. This exhibition premieres a new body of work generated during Fallen Fruit's recent residency in Colombia, South America which features a series of photographs and video installations exploring the social, political and pop history of the banana.

The opening reception, on **Tuesday June 16 from 8pm – 10pm**, features *Are You Happy to See Me?*, a participatory performance involving hundreds of bananas available for eating. Attendees will be encouraged to photograph themselves playing with this often comical or suggestive fruit.

Fallen Fruit's installation at LACE engages its subject in a range of bold and oblique strategies, signaling perhaps that no single history of the banana is possible. The title for the exhibition, *United Fruit* comes from the United Fruit Company which exists today in a much reduced form as Chiquita Bananas. More powerful than the Latin American countries it colonized, the corporation was marked by its ruthlessness and corruption, and its exploitation of workers, a turbulent history of protests and events that lead to the infamous Banana Massacre of 1928 near the town of Ciénega, Colombia, which Fallen Fruit visited to create this work. Burns, Viegner and Young chose to retain the title *United Fruit* for its hopeful and utopian echo, a contrast to its actual history.



The banana was first brought to Colombia over a hundred years ago by the United Fruit Company, which had a stranglehold on the global banana market, dominating all of North America and parts of Europe. They helped Latin American countries build railroads which were then utilized primarily for banana shipments, building a vast system of plantations which held workers in perpetual isolation. The economic model of the United Fruit Company became a template for a new kind of global monopoly capitalism. In the 1970s the company finally collapsed from a combination of political pressure, its own corruption, and changing economics.

Among the pieces in this exhibition is *Peligro Trampero*, a wall-size photograph of a Colombian banana plantation on nine panels. This solitary landscape is opposite a series of portraits of the unionized workers from the plantation. In the rear gallery, two video projections approach the banana from different points of view. *Los Bananeros (The Banana Workers)* is a study of the processing of the bananas at the plantation, illustrating the various stations and the individuals who work there. Complementing the production cycle, the *Banana Machine* video is a serial study of teenagers eating bananas, one after another, in a sort of mechanized consumption. The *Banana Machine* video plays the simple pleasure of eating against erotic flirtation, turning on the concept of ripeness, that of the fruit, and that of the teenagers in their transition to adulthood.

Rounding out the works in the rear gallery is a multi-channel video project featuring interviews with a variety of Colombians on the politics, history and culture of the banana. Installed on a series of monitors with headphones, visitors are invited to engage in a person-to-person encounter with the individuals the artists spoke with during their time residency. Sometimes captured in Spanish or English (there are no subtitles), these conversations reveal the role language plays in Fallen Fruit's transcultural production.

The banana is a cultural symbol that has a powerful history of marketing and manipulation. In addition to its examination of the social and political history of the banana, *United Fruit* also examines the playful place of the banana in pop culture as the central prop in suggestive jokes and naughty humor. As much as there is a prohibition against stating the obvious, the force of the banana as a phallic symbol cannot be ignored.

The projects included in the *United Fruit* exhibition is part of a new long-term work-in-progress entitled *The Colonial History of Fruit*. This initiative combines the focus of Fallen Fruit's work with the local or particular with the global, allowing the artists to juxtapose two kinds of history: the broad or "objective" and the anecdotal or "subjective." The history of how the fruit we eat comes from a specific place and ends up on our tables moves through specific or objective economic, historical and political forces. The "subjective" history resides in individuals and groups, the anecdotal tales of how people find new fruits, rediscover old ones, or carry along others from distant places. The next fruits to be examined are the kiwi and arctic berries.

ABOUT FALLEN FRUIT

Fallen Fruit is a collaboration between David Burns, Matias Viegner, and Austin Young. Founded in 2004, their projects range from social practice (events, performances and public actions) to photography, video and installations. Fallen Fruit deploys fruit in their work to examine social relationships, the environment, urban space and transnational capitalism. Fruit in this sense is transhistorical and crosses all classes, ages and ethnic groups. It is both ubiquitous and often invisible, yet it is also the food that appears most often in art. All of Fallen Fruit's projects touch on, work through or work with fruit in some manner. They state that "fruit is the lens through which we look at the world."

www.fallenfruit.org



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ABOUT LACE

LACE both champions and challenges the art of our time by fostering artists who innovate, explore, and risk. We move within and beyond our four walls to provide opportunities for diverse publics to engage deeply with contemporary art. In doing so, we further dialogue and participation between and among artists and those audiences. For three decades and counting, LACE has presented the work of over 5,000 artists in over 3,000 programs and events. LACE's programming is either free or low-cost, making it accessible to all audiences.

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LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)
6522 Hollywood Boulevard, Los Angeles CA 90028
Gallery Hours: Wed - Sun 12 - 6pm, and Fri 12 - 9 pm
Suggested donation \$3, Members free

SUPPORT

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The opening is sponsored by **Whole Foods Market, Arroyo Pkwy**.

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