The Fruits of Empire: Contextualizing Food in Post-Civil War American Art and Culture

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Abstract
The Fruits of Empire is a social and visual history of food in American art. With four fruit case-studies on representations of grapes, oranges, watermelons, and bananas, this project demonstrates how the visual culture of food provides a platform for examining the expansion and reconstruction of the United States in the decades following the Civil War. While chapters on grape and orange representations from California and Florida reveal the ways in which fruit serviced national expansion and the colonization of Americas fruit-lands, a chapter on watermelon imagery illustrates the racial stereotypes assigned to food that reinforced social divisions between white from ‘colored’ eaters. A final chapter on depictions of bananas investigates the exploitation of land and labor underwriting American fruit corporations in Central America. By directing attention to representations of fruit in the Sunbelt and broader Americas, this dissertation reorients the American Art History canon centered in the Northeast to art and artists in the country’s borders. This project also widens the scope of American Art History by looking beyond the fine arts to the visual culture of cookbooks, crate labels, and silverware. Examining those who labored and prepared the fruits visible in artistic depictions sheds light on another overlooked subject. In the end, readers discover that representations of food in American art and culture are neither innocent nor straight forward, but politically-charged pictures driven by ideologies that support or challenge an imperial agenda in North America. By excavating the cultural histories of food in American art, The Fruits of Empire reveals how the cultivation of fruit in soil and on canvas participated in the cultivation of American empire.

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Most Americans are not aware of that because most Americans don't even think of our country as an empire. "What I've tried to do in the book is chart how each of the different Latino groups came, what was happening in their country that forced them to leave . . . what cities did they first arrive in, how did they establish their communities, what kind of hostility or welcome did they meet when they arrived in these various cities around the country. A garrison state for more than forty years, Guatemala was home to the longest and bloodiest civil war in Central American history. The roots of that war go back to an almost-forgotten CIA-sponsored coup in 1954, which overthrew a democratically elected president. American culture is a diverse mix of customs and traditions from nearly every region of the world. Here is a brief overview of American holidays, food, clothing and more. There are also styles of cooking and types of foods that are specific to a region. Southern-style cooking is often called "American comfort food" and includes dishes such as fried chicken, collard greens, black-eyed peas and corn bread. American folk art is an artistic style and is identified with quilts and other hand-crafted items. American music is very diverse with many, many styles, including rhythm and blues, jazz, gospel, country and western, bluegrass, rock 'n' roll and hip hop. Baseball is called America's favorite pastime.