

GLORIOUS FODDER

Food manipulation

Food is a hot substance these days. Besides the paradigm shift towards more local and authentic, and the many reflections on its alimentary and nutritious aspects, lots of designers just love to juggle and mess around with a mix of edible ingredients. DAMN° selected a few from the many stories of 'food manipulation' we came across these last few weeks. Again, the device here is, better not to try any of this at home...

PORTRAIT OF GREENSBORO AS LEMONS, 2014
Installation by Fallen Fruit
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro NC
Courtesy of the artist

Intellectual Speculations

Fallen Fruit: Ten years of productive play



Fallen Fruit is not your average collective. Proactively smearing boundaries and intervening in contemporary scenarios, they are all about democracy in the purest sense of the term. By looking after all citizens, FF believes that the world can become massively better. The logic makes sense. Seeing the public sphere as belonging to the people, they simply wish to exploit its potential, such as by planting loads of food-bearing plants whose fruits can be freely enjoyed by all. This idea extends to the presentation of works of art and artefacts based on fruit, and the meaningful dialogue associated therewith, as well as to programmes that empower people. With 10 years of projects under their belt, FF has provided a viable working model.

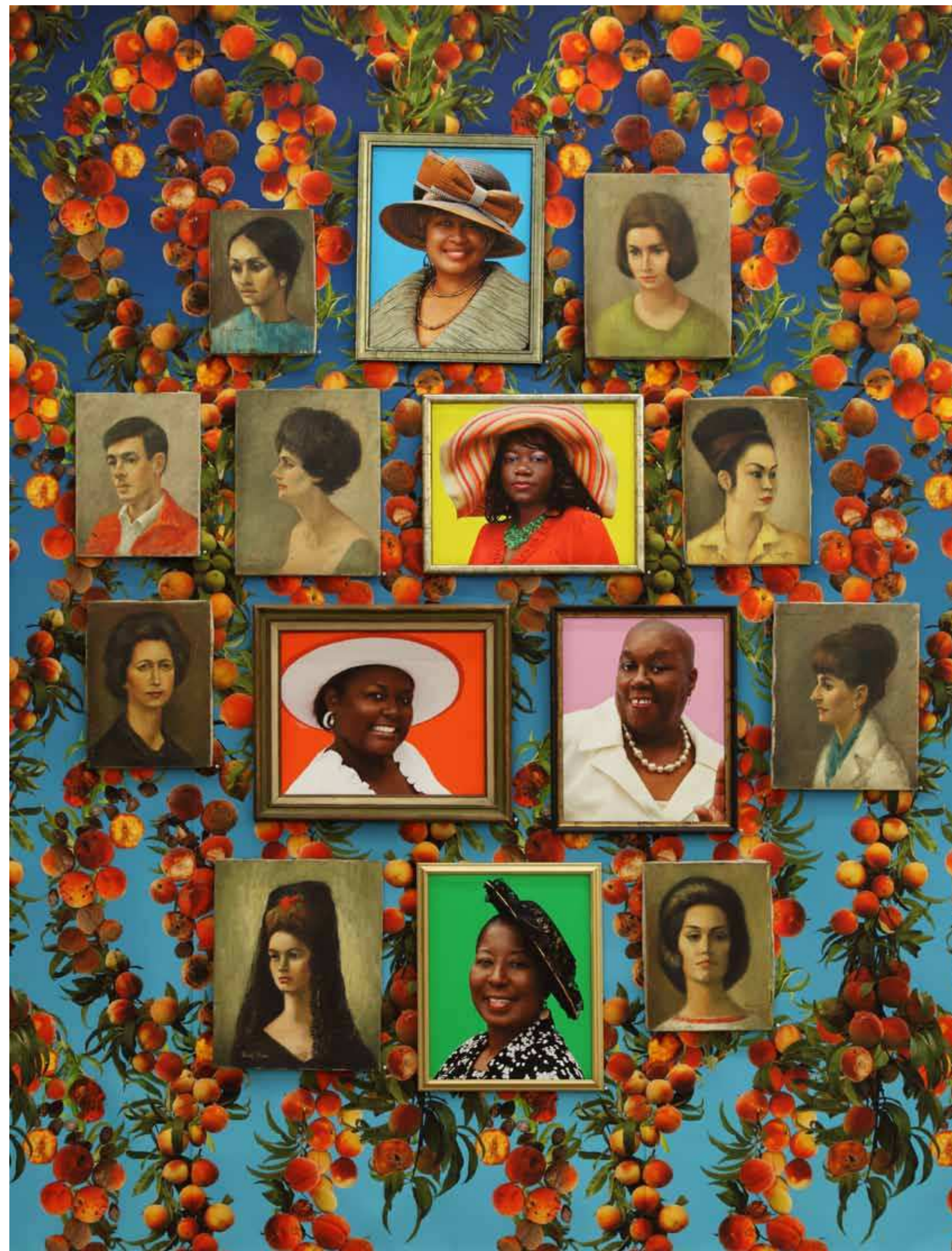
FRANCESCO SPAMPINATO

A Los Angeles-based collective active since 2004, Fallen Fruit works at the crossroads of art, urbanism, agriculture, and activism. Founded by CalArts alumni David Burns, Austin Young, and Matias Viegner, it's currently operated by Burns and Young. For the past 10 years, FF has realised dozens of interventions, installations, and workshops involving local communities in the public sphere and exhibition spaces, all of them built around fruit as a universal symbol of aggregation and democracy, or, as repeatedly stated, "a common denominator to change the way you think about the world."

FF was born in response to a call for projects put forward by the Journal of Aesthetics & Protest, asking for alternative solutions to social and economic issues. They replied thus: "We call upon the city and urban planning groups to begin plantings that

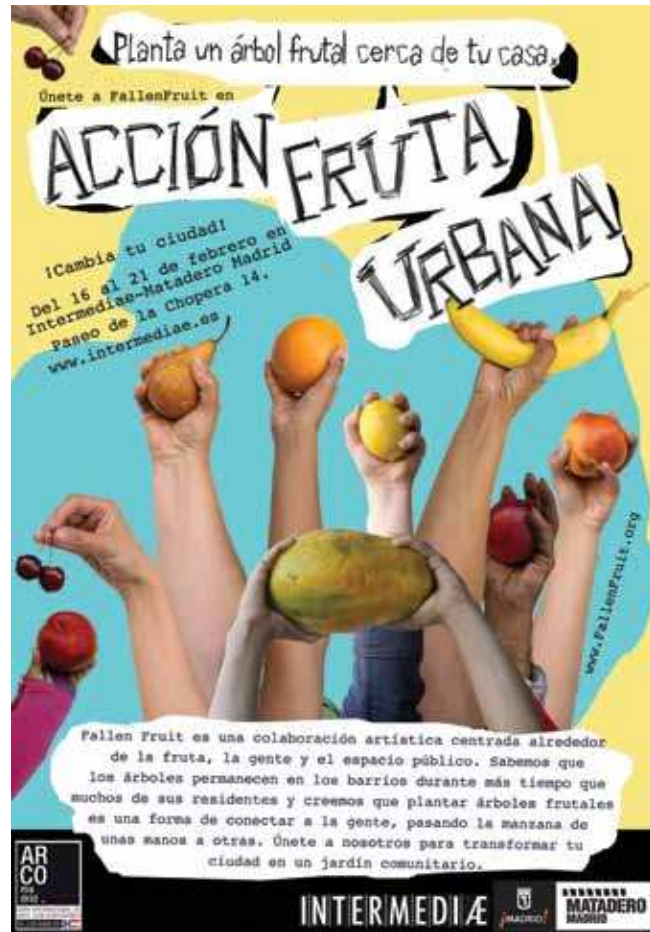
yield edible goods to be shared by the city's citizens. The utopian promise of California always pictured orange trees with snow-capped mountains in the distance. The new California should have oranges planted between office buildings and bananas in parking lots."

Its first project was to map the public fruit trees in the neighbourhood of Silver Lake, the stamping ground of the three members. After that, maps of Sunset Junction, Echo Park, and Venice Beach were designed, as well as neighbourhoods in Santa Fe, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Guadalajara (Mexico), and overseas in Malmö, Copenhagen, Linz, Athens, and Brisbane. The maps, which show the types and locations of fruit trees, are freely distributed to passers-by, online or through local institutions where FF has been invited or is temporarily resident.



FALLEN FRUIT FACTORY, 2014
Collage, GOMA, Brisbane
Courtesy of the artist

FALLEN FRUIT OF ATLANTA, 2013
Installation, Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, Atlanta
Courtesy of the artist



At the core of the group's ethic is a sense that what is in the public sphere belongs to everyone and that fruit would provide a lot of people with a portion of their daily requirement. "The gift model – giving without an expectation of return – forms the basis of the public fruit project, re-territorialising urban space with a sort of residual slippage of control and restrictions", wrote Viegner (now a faculty member at CalArts) in 2006 in *Cabinet* magazine. Although this idea of a 'gift' is sometimes mixed with Robin Hood tactics like guerrilla plantings and nocturnal fruit forages from the branches of private trees overlooking public pavements.

When invited by the art institution, FF started collecting fruit-themed artworks and artefacts from the museum's archives or other local resources. It did this at LACMA (2010), Salt Lake City Art Center (2011), Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (2013), and more recently at the Skirball Center (2014), where it investigated the pomegranate as a symbol of fertility and marriage. The most radical was their 2009 project for LACE, which explored the social and pop history of the banana as a symbol of colonial exploitation.

TUTTI-FRUTTI

Pomegranate, banana, and pineapple-related artworks, artefacts, objects, and media are installed in front of wallpapers, where nature morte is transformed into rococo patterns. At other times the installations are presented as pop-up shops, such as *Fruitique* (2013) at the Hammer Museum, with fruit-themed artworks made by artists invited by FF, or by museum viewers, or by children, sold as 'educational' activities. Participation is the goal of any FF initiative, be it a lemonade stand or a workshop where the neighbours are taught to make jams with fruit from their backyard.



2

3

ACCIÓN FRUTA URBANA, 2010 (1)
Public billboard, Madrid
Courtesy of the artist

BANANA RAINBOW, 2013 (2)
Wallpaper
New Children's Museum, San Diego
Courtesy of the artist

EVERYDAY OBJECTS, 2008 (3)
Jam jars
Courtesy of the artist



Here, interaction and participation are synonymous with empowerment. To show people how to do things by themselves lets them take responsibility instead of demanding it from local authorities and institutions. The most recent and greater goal accomplished by FF could be said to be the transformation of the south LA community park, Del Aire, into "the first public fruit park in California". FF is currently planting fruit trees at MacArthur Park, and hopefully their model will soon be followed in other cities of the world.

In the 1960s and 70s, many artists and architects, often working collectively, offered generic public opportunities to take part in processes of understanding political and economic structures. FF is representative of another step forward, because more than an understanding, it is offering tools. A 1960s group like San Francisco-based *The Diggers*, for instance, used to give-out food for free, while FF teaches people how to become independent, developing in them the civic sense of protection and the valorisation of nature that forms the basis of the eco-sustainable society of the future.

fallenfruit.org

Come Together: The Rise of Cooperative Art and Design, by Francesco Spampinato, published by Princeton Architectural Press, New York, November 2014



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Installation
Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro NC
Courtesy of the artist

STREET BANANAS, 2014
Public action, Los Angeles
Courtesy of the artist

2