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Fallen Fruit

By Annie Buckley

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The Los Angeles-based artist collective **Fallen Fruit** (<https://www.artnews.com/t/fallen-fruit/>) has gained the attention of the art world and local community alike with a fusion of populism, relational esthetics and adolescent antics. The trio—David Burns, Matias Viegner and Austin Young—began mapping fruit trees growing on or extending over public property in Los Angeles in 2004 and making the maps free to the public. They also hold regular events, such as Nocturnal Fruit Forages and Public Fruit Jams (held for the past several years at Machine Project, also in L.A.), offering participants the opportunity to pick fruit under the moonlight or make jam. That activities like making and canning food are traditionally domestic undertakings adds a layer to the collective's complex, if lighthearted, approach to the blurring of public and private space. Fallen Fruit was recently featured in two concurrent gallery exhibitions. Both venues were faced with the dilemma of presenting fundamentally interactive, participatory art as static objects in a fixed space.

At the artist-run commercial gallery Another Year in LA, Fallen Fruit's work was available for sale for the first time. Culled from the tools and accessories of Public Fruit Jams, the show was a thought-provoking blend of event souvenirs and DIY art. Each of the items, including cutting boards, knives, jam jars, aprons and bags, is engraved or printed with text plucked from anonymous comments about the collaborative's videos, which are posted on YouTube. Seemingly chosen for provocation, the quotes range from supportive to mocking to bigoted. For example: "to all 'haters' this basically shows that we can live off the land," "dipshit liberals always looking for a handout" and "wut a fag." Also on view were color photographs of teens eating fruit, bottles of fruit-infused vodka (drinkable art, available for sale), and a poetic and engaging text piece, *Jam Score* (2009), that blends three participants' accounts of a Public Fruit Jam. Crowded, fun and winkingly ironic, the exhibition as a whole encapsulated the collective's free-spirited inclusiveness.

In comparison, the work at LACE, developed during a recent residency in Colombia, is elegant and serious but lacks specificity and vigor. This exhibition is part of the collective's new, ongoing project, "The Colonial History of Fruit," which aims to critically examine the very timely issue of fruit's journey from crop to tabletop. But the show's lush, large-scale photographs of banana trees and workers—respectively punctuated by shimmering sunlight and bright yellow aprons—come close to resembling advertisements for the corporate policies the exhibition purportedly challenges. Multiple videos feature the artists' interviews with locals. Although the questions are translated, the responses are not. For Spanish-speaking viewers, the articulate responses stand in sharp contrast to the often vague and meandering questions. One hopes that further iterations of this promising initiative will more effectively integrate the humor and critique for which Fallen Fruit has gained steady acclaim with a more in-depth investigation of the fragile complexities of the global economy.

Photo: Fallen Fruit and participants during a Public Fruit Jam, 2008; at Machine Project, Los Angeles.

