



**Compte rendu de Shana KLEIN, The Fruits of Empire.
Art, Food, and the Politics of Race in the Age of
American Expansion, Berkeley, University of California
Press, 2020, 241 pp.**

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districts that he won there, the congressmen had previously supported radical reconstruction? Conversely, did Garfield's merely tepid endorsement of restricting Chinese immigration cost him support in the West (Hancock flipped California and Nevada)? (Garfield had persuaded Hayes to veto an exclusion bill on the grounds that it violated a treaty with China, and a fraudulent letter surfaced during the campaign accusing him of favoring unlimited Chinese immigration.) In short, given the emphasis that Arrington places on Garfield's commitment to equality, this otherwise fine book missed an opportunity to examine the election results in that light.

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The Fruits of Empire: Art, Food, and the Politics of Race in the Age of American Expansion. By Shana Klein (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2020) 241 pp. \$64.45

A picture, the aphorism goes, is worth a thousand words. According to Bourdieu, such added value has much to do with the amnesia that clouds the genesis of works of graphic art.¹ In *The Fruits of Empire*, Klein aims at recovering the repressed or hidden dimensions contained in aesthetic and commercial depictions of exotic fruit. Fruit consumption increased tremendously after the Civil War when innovations in horticulture, food preservation, and transport made it possible to satisfy the American demand for tropical and semi-tropical produce. Without doubt, pictorial advertisements stimulated the growing appetite for bananas, grapes, oranges, pineapples, and watermelons. Yet Klein pushes the argument further. The fine arts, such as still lifes of fruit bowls, and illustrated instructions in cookery books, contributed to domesticate the often unfamiliar, sometimes spurned goods. They betrayed no hint of the labor required to grow these plants but offered advice about culinary technics and table manners to enhance their acceptability in middle- and upper-class households. Pictorial fruits were ubiquitous, and the reliance on the literary trope of the cultivated garden completed the "meaning narratives and semiotic power" of these images (10). They justified the expansion of northern capital to the South, West, and Hawai'i, and of continental funds to Central and South America, and they condoned the subjugation of indigenous, African-American or Mexican people who worked in fields, vineyards, or plantations. Pictures, Klein says, did not merely reflect social reality. They were constitutive of it as what they contained and excluded was a powerful lens to construe society and perpetuate its inequalities.

Five fruits allow Klein to illuminate particular aspects of the contribution that legitimate, though not always established, artists made to the way in which the United States presented itself to itself. The cultural pedigree of painted grapes emphasized the civilizing mission of the American settlement of California while erasing the Mexican heritage in winegrowing.

1 Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris, Seuil, 1998), 547.

Portrayals of work scenes signaled the presence of non-white workers but their significance tended to get lost in the paintings' quaintness. Oranges in Florida appeared, for a short time, as an emancipatory vessel for African-American freedmen before Jim Crow laws put an end to both freedom and the inclusion of leisurely black people in photographs and paintings of citrus groves. Imagery of watermelons ran on the stereotype of uncontrollable, uncouth African Americans eating them, which in turn required the use of artistic dignifiers, such as silverware or porcelain dishes, to achieve the cultural refinement necessary for their inclusion in the food repertoire of white consumers.

The pineapple and the banana allow Klein to illustrate the pictorial work of American capitalism along the supply chain. Corporate marketing staged scenes in which Hawai'i appeared as a paradise of natural beauty, easy productivity, and racial harmony in field and factory. It occasionally sponsored well-known artists to promote exotic fruits, though not always with the desired result. Georgia O'Keeffe, who seemed troubled by the strained industrial and labor relations in Hawai'i during the 1930s, proved too independent-minded to deliver anything but her signature-style take on a pineapple bud. Nevertheless, the painting made it into an advertisement in 1941, albeit accompanied with the portrait of a beaming, white, modern, well-to-do family of four drinking pineapple juice out of stylish glasses (the same type of idealized family that would eat wonderbread for hygienic reasons and bran flakes for regular bowel movement).

O'Keeffe's creative sovereignty raises the question of the autonomy of aesthetics in general. To be sure, Klein sprinkles her narrative with other examples of art that is overtly or covertly critical of contemporaneous developments. Her most expansive treatment relates, however, to recent work that highlights the ways in which banana imperialism and the economic growth that it pursued have undermined the democratic values of equality and liberty in Latin America throughout the last century.

In other words, the selection of works in *The Fruits of Empire* leaves little place for humor, irony, or disapproval. Part of the reason for Klein's largely deterministic interpretation may well lie in the absence of any attempt at classifying visual images and the different values and aims that propel advertisement (sales), painting (aesthetics), and photography (record). Yet, if Klein does not capture the entire, complicated story of art and imperial expansion, she tells an important and often sorry part of it.

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Neoliberal Cities: The Remaking of Postwar Urban America. Edited by Andrew J. Diamond and Thomas J. Sugrue (New York, New York University Press, 2020) 218 pp. \$89.00 cloth \$30.00 paper

In their introduction, Diamond and Sugrue describe two strands of recent urban scholarship—"one centered in social theory and geography, the