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Absence and Repair: Encounters between the Photographic Archive of the United Fruit Company and *Banana Craze*'s Database of Contemporary Art of the Americas

This article examines the interplay between the United Fruit Company's (UFC) photographic archive and the contemporary art archive of the digital humanities project *Banana Craze*. Through an analysis of UFC's archival photographs, it explores the company's neocolonial practices and the visual erasure of the hardships faced by local workers. Drawing on Ariella Azoulay's concept of "civil imagination" and Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation," the article proposes contemporary art as a method of archival repair. By juxtaposing historical images with modern artworks from *Banana Craze*—including works by Ana Núñez, Andrea Chung, Elkin Calderón, and Leandro Katz—it demonstrates how art can address historical omissions and foster new understandings of past injustices.

Keywords: bananas; archival repair; United Fruit Company; monoculture; photographic archive; contemporary art

In a 1924 photograph, five golf players leisurely enjoy their pastime (fig. 1). One is about to hit the ball; the other four look on while nonchalantly posing for the camera. On the right, a group of children, presumably the players' caddies, observe the man who is putting—except for the child nearest to us, who is aware that a photo is being taken and directs his gaze towards the camera. The contrast between the male players and the children on the right is striking. The men are dressed in clean white shirts, bow ties, pants, shoes, and hats, and their poses convey a sense of entitlement, while the children's clothes appear dirty, and one of the boys is barefoot. The

racial difference between the two groups draws the viewer's attention: the five men are white, and the children have darker skin.¹ The composition of the photograph suggests a clear distance between the two groups, both racially and in terms of social class. The children are visible just outside the lighter putting green—where the five men are standing—as if they are not allowed to get any closer. They are also on the extreme right-hand side of the photograph, balancing the composition but peripheral to it.

It is unclear where exactly this photo was taken. It could have been in Panama, Costa Rica, Colombia, or Honduras. These were among the countries where the United Fruit Company (UFC) implemented its system of banana plantation settlements with irrigation, packaging, and transportation technology. The plantations also included enclaves where the company's employees lived and worked, which included both housing and shared services such as hospitals,

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/zkg-2025-3008>



1 *Welfare Series: Playing Golf, #140*, May 1924, gelatin silver process on paper, 20.3 × 25.4 cm. Boston, Baker Library Special Collections and Archives, Harvard Business School

schools, and stores, as well as research laboratories and recreational facilities. These enclaves included golf courses, like the one depicted in the photograph, for UFC employees.

Today, this photograph is part of the company's extensive photographic archive housed in Harvard's Baker Library, an archive filled with images that repeatedly show scenes of Americans having fun and enjoying their time in the banana enclaves. Pictures of white men and women playing golf, tennis, or billiards, attending parties, enjoying fancy dinners, and watching live dance performances, among many other leisure activities, constitute a significant portion of the more than 10,000 images held in the ar-

chive. After examining hundreds of such photographs, any researcher would begin to detect notable absences. Where are the images of the agricultural workers' living and working conditions? Did they also have access to such leisure activities? Did their families enjoy the same pleasures and advantages the banana company provided to its white employees? The persistent absence of such images begins to suggest a different range of narratives that were experienced particularly by the local and racialized population working on the plantations.

Photography's contingency—its ability to capture not only what the photographer intended to include in the frame but also those elements

beyond their control, such as, in the picture above, the one child's lack of shoes or the fact that another child appears to look back at us as he returns the photographer's gaze—allows these alternative narratives to emerge. These unintended elements break through even in the most controlled scenarios, creating space for what Roland Barthes called “the madness of photography.”² As Christopher Pinney has argued, the photographic surface is a space of “unruly contingencies,” meaning that images reveal not only the photographer's intended subject but also details that escape their original intention and sometimes convey more—or even a different story—about the photographed reality.³ There is no archive that tells the story of the banana plantations from the agricultural workers' perspective, and so, in this essay, we argue that these contingent details are crucial for understanding the lived reality within the banana enclaves. Contemporary artists revisiting these images draw on what photography's contingency reveals to expose and address the dramatic realities faced by agricultural workers.

An artwork that exposes such realities is *El Dictador* (The Dictator), a 1976–1978 short video film made by Argentine artist David Lamelas in collaboration with American artist Hildegard Duane. It explores the role of mass media in the construction of power structures, cult personalities, and celebrities.⁴ The film is a satirical interview between a television news anchor (played by Duane) and the fictional colonel and dictator Ricardo García Pérez (played by Lamelas) for the television news program *Newsmakers*. She questions and condemns his authoritarian policies, attacks on the press, and persecution of university students, and interrogates him about the mysterious deaths of his five ex-wives. The dictator, a character inspired by various Latin American dictators such as Anastasio Somoza (Nicaragua), Rafael Trujillo (Dominican Republic), and Juan Domingo Perón (Argentina), boasts of his exploits and is not at

all intimidated by the cameras. At the end of the interview, the bizarre, arrogant, and tyrannical fictional dictator declares that he plans to flee his “Banana Republic” of Santa Ana and seek refuge in the United States. While the parodic video critiques the complicity of the mass media in the 1970s in normalizing military dictatorships and coups, bending the truth, and manipulating viewers in order to maintain social inequalities and power structures, *El Dictador* also draws on figures from previous decades and the popular imaginary of “Banana Republic” dictators. Indeed, the work both exposes and explores how the media, from photographic reportage to news programs and mainstream television formats, has a history of first propelling tyrants to power in Latin America and then continuing to support them. Further, it draws attention to such men's complicity with US power structures. Thus, it is not far-fetched to suggest that there is an invisible thread connecting the neocolonial practices of the UFC that sear through photography's contingency in the aforementioned 1924 photograph, and the conception and fabrication of “Banana Republic” autocrats exposed in the 1970s video.

In this essay, we will confront the photographic albums of the UFC with *Banana Craze*'s digital database of contemporary art, which we created in 2021, and which includes *El Dictador*. *Banana Craze* is a digital humanities project that includes a virtual exhibition, a growing digital archive with 175 artworks, and a series of online public programs. By juxtaposing these two visual corpora, we aim to explore not only how individual artworks today can respond to archival photography and thus address, challenge, and resist its visual codes, omissions, and manipulations, but also how the tension that is sparked when these two vast bodies of work are juxtaposed can act like an electrical charge, or in other words, a current between the two points that activates and electrifies each individual corpus to its full potential.

By comparing images from the UFC photo archive with references to the visual culture of the UFC from several contemporary artworks in *Banana Craze*, this essay opens up a path to reflect on archival repair strategies from the realm of contemporary art making.⁵ We analyze how the corporation's use of photography supported its neocolonial practices in Latin America and the Caribbean during the first half of the twentieth century. More importantly, we also propose that the absences in such a vast visual archive can be symbolically repaired through the work of contemporary artists. Furthermore, we suggest that *Banana Craze*'s horizontal, nonlinear, open access enables a radical form of intellectual hospitality that allows users of the platform to react, interact, and take from its visual database to create their own repositories of images that respond to their research interests, questions, and needs.⁶ This, of course, is not possible with the physical photo albums of the UFC archive, and thus this generosity functions as a symbolic gesture of restoring the power of agency to the image consumers and diminishing that of the UFC archive's image creators.

In this essay, we analyze four works of contemporary art that respond to different restorative practices from varied perspectives, media, and visual language: Ana Núñez's photo book *Hoja Bandera* (2023), Andrea Chung's photographic cutout *Daylight Cum An' Mi Waan Guh Home* (2008), Elkin Calderón's photo series and video of the former UFC camp facilities in Colombia (2014), and Leandro Katz's video *Paradox* (2001). As we will demonstrate, these contemporary artworks demand that we confront the images the company chose to erase and the voices it silenced for profit. Listening and seeing would have meant recognizing the workers as fully human—a truth the company refused to face. These contemporary artworks spotlight the lasting harm of the UFC's exploitative legacy in Latin America and call out the abuses perpetuated by its modern-day successors. By gesturing

to and sometimes filling the gaps in the UFC's photographic archive, they also push the narrative toward justice, exposing what was hidden and symbolically repairing what was lost. As part of *Banana Craze*'s larger collection of banana-focused works of contemporary art, they also reinforce the vibrancy of the project's responses to the UFC photographic archive from a place of engaged and active political enunciation that claims a space for meaningful possibilities within the limits of the archive.

From a methodological perspective, our analysis draws from the proposals of Ariella Azoulay and her concept of the "civil imagination," as well as Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation," to address history's omissions. Azoulay's "civil imagination" encourages us to consider the photographs that were not taken or that we cannot see and to understand photography as an event, that is, as a series of actions, objects, relations, and encounters triggered by the (hypothetical) presence of the camera and the production of a photograph.⁷ Hartman's "critical fabulation" is an invitation to imagine "what could have been."⁸ In Hartman's words, "the intent of this practice is not to give voice to the slave [or the agricultural worker], but rather to imagine what cannot be verified, a realm of experience which is situated between two zones of death—social and corporeal death—and to reckon with the precarious lives which are visible only in the moment of their disappearance."⁹ We also draw from Afrofuturism, a cultural movement that envisions counter-futures for Black people and imagines a liberated existence for Black experiences and identities through technology, fiction, art, music, and literature.¹⁰ This article proposes that art is an ideal space to explore the political potential of visualizing the pairing of civil imagination and critical fabulation, making it a pivotal intervention strategy for repairing the archive. Moreover, inspired by these theories, we propose the concept of "fruiturity," an idea aimed at reimagining the experiences, histories, and futures of the

so-called Banana Republics, particularly focusing on the agricultural workers who continue to labor in banana plantations, and on the sociocultural impact of these sites in the ongoing configuration of a Latin American iconosphere or visual environment. The goal is to construct a new field of vision that generates fresh knowledge of the past, enabling us to imagine a different future that offers possibilities where previously there were only limitations—especially in contexts where histories of violence and oppression have obscured the truth.

The United Fruit Company's Photographic Archive

In 1979, United Brands Company, a merger between the United Fruit Company and American Seal-Kap (AMK Corporation), donated 75 photo albums to Harvard Business School's Baker Library. The albums contained approximately 10,400 photographs of the UFC's operations and holdings, with the images taken between 1891 and 1962 in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and the United States. The majority of the photographs depict scenes from the period between 1920 and 1960. All the photographs are positive prints, varying in size and material, and each is accompanied by a brief caption describing its content. The collection can be categorized into recurring themes. Alongside images of Americans enjoying themselves, there are hundreds of photographs showcasing infrastructure and technological developments in the enclaves. The archive also includes depictions of scientific research related to the plantations—such as laboratory settings, fungi, bananas, and banana plant leaves—as well as pictures of transformed and untouched landscapes, housing and architecture, and the transportation of fruit via railways and boats. Images of agricultural workers are also recurrent, though they are often depicted as secondary to the photographs' main

subjects. For example, in a picture of a man with his mule, the caption erases the man's presence by labeling the image "Mule with Junk," emphasizing the animal and its cargo while disregarding the man standing beside it. These intentional erasures and omissions are precisely what contemporary artists involved in the *Banana Craze* project aim to spotlight. Through their artworks, they reveal a history that has been hidden in plain sight.

The archival photographs contain minimal information about the photographers who captured them, as this was not deemed important for the company's records. However, we know that a diverse group of local and foreign photographers were hired by the company in each enclave or traveled to nearby plantations to document the UFC's operations. Scholar Liliana Gómez conjectures that the photos in the Harvard archive were taken either by professional studios located near the enclaves or by UFC employees.¹¹ It is important to note that these photographers did not work exclusively for the UFC but were hired for specific projects, and their approaches to photographing life on the plantations and enclaves varied widely. While the photographers' names and the locations where they worked can be helpful information for reading and understanding the archive and its nuances in each region, the significance of these images depends more on the value that they created.¹² In other words, we derive more from these photographs when we examine them in terms of the extra meaning they carry or the value they create without meaning to do so.¹³ Photography's contingency and what the event of photography triggers are crucial concepts in this understanding of the UFC archive.

Gómez understands the UFC's early photo archive as a means of self-legitimization and regional development projection. The archive's disorderly arrangement suggests retroactive curation, reflecting the corporation's attempt to control its narrative. In the 1920s, photos became

integral to internal communication, shedding light on labor and land transformations.¹⁴ Gómez identifies two major poles in the collection: an imperial perspective and an extractive narrative; she also recognizes the potential for empowering alternative viewpoints.¹⁵ Ultimately, these images from the company's visual records render the UFC a pioneering case for understanding the value of the visual economy—in other words, not only the images' content but also their production, consumption, material form, ownership, institutionalization, exchange, possession, and social accumulation.¹⁶ This is one of the few photographic archives held by the Baker Library, a fact that speaks to the company's pioneering use of photography. This drive to document the company's activities through photography, along with the deposit of its records at Harvard University, can be understood as a self-legitimizing effort.¹⁷

This idea gains strength when one notices the gaps in the archive. Why do we see only the outside of the agricultural workers' homes and not the inhumane overcrowding of the unhealthy interiors? Where are the photos of the hundreds—perhaps even thousands; records are spotty at best—of corpses from the 1928 massacre perpetrated by the Colombian government in support of the UFC?¹⁸ Indeed, by focusing on expatriate life in the enclaves, photographs such as the one analyzed at the beginning of the essay promoted a neocolonial doctrine inspired by ideas of “manifest destiny,” in which progress was believed to be indistinguishable from white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture, and local people were seen as the inevitable victims of this progress because of their perceived inferiority.¹⁹ While technology (laboratories, machinery, and railroads), leisure (parties, sports, and recreation), and institutions (churches, schools, and hospitals) were often depicted in the photos, farming realities (including labor, unsanitary conditions, disease, and protest) were rarely portrayed. This is truly remarkable given that it was farming that made the entire enterprise possible.

The photographs were circulated mainly in company publications such as annual reports. The main purpose of such pictures was to show the company's shareholders and other stakeholders how well expatriate employees lived. These images also visually erased the threat of the “wild” nature of the tropics, while transforming the depicted places into an imaginary homeland. These photographs also reveal some practices of ethnic segregation that existed on the plantations and the strict hierarchical racial and class system by which the company operated. If, by the early twentieth century, countries in the Caribbean, Central America, and northern South America were becoming “Banana Republics”—politically unstable countries susceptible to economic dependency on a single crop, foreign influence, and social inequality—pictures such as the ones included in the archive reassured distant viewers of the pleasures and advantages of life in the enclaves.

Although the UFC was a private company, it had close links to the US government, acting as a bridge between the countries where it operated and the US fight against communism and its expansionist agenda.²⁰ This alliance proved successful in terms of US neocolonialism in Latin America and the positive results of the banana business. Photography played a crucial role in constructing and reinforcing the narrative that supported US economic, military, and cultural endeavors in Central America, the Caribbean, and Colombia—one that did not reflect the reality of life on the plantations but rather helped to reinforce a certain image of stability.²¹ Thus, as Kevin Coleman has noted, photography served as evidence of the perceived need for US intervention, juxtaposing images of poverty, seemingly stagnant indigenous populations, and dense jungles with others that presented the American approach as the solution by depicting large-scale machinery, modern infrastructure, and meticulously organized fields of monoculture crops.²²

Beginning in the 1960s—during the early emergence of conceptualist practices in Latin America, the initial uprisings against US imperialism in the region, and the global rise of leftist movements—several artists from across the Americas and the Caribbean began to critique the UFC, exposing the failures of its interventions and drawing attention to the omissions in its institutional narrative. These omissions are evident not only in the UFC’s photographic collection—which did not become publicly available until 1979—but also in the extensive range of visual materials produced for the company, including plush toys, comic books, and other children’s merchandise, as well as cookbooks, magazine ads, and television commercials.

Banana Craze: A Digital Humanities Project

Once obscure outside the regions where it occurs naturally, the banana has, in just a century, become the world’s number one fruit. From 1899 to 1970, the United Fruit Company was responsible for making bananas the most consumed fruit in the world through its intensive farming and exploitative trading system. Today, 19.1 million tons of bananas are exported per year, with approximately 72 percent of exports coming from Latin America and the Caribbean.²³ *Banana Craze* is a collection of 175 works of contemporary art from the Americas curated by us that draws on banana imagery to explore how the traumatic legacy of the UFC’s massive footprint on the region has shaped the past and present of Latin America’s sociopolitical history, national economies, cultural identities, and environmental landscape, as well as its diasporas.²⁴

As the authors of *Banana Craze*, we bridge academic and curatorial practice to explore the aforementioned impact of banana monoculture through a visual repository that is organized as a virtual exhibition, a digital archive, and a se-

ries of online public programs and publications. The works of contemporary art in *Banana Craze* examine neocolonialism, extractivism, identity, and otherness in the region. Public activities in *Banana Craze* highlight the diversity of participating artists, including conversations with cultural leaders and social actors, creative workshops, and documentary film cycles. *Banana Craze*’s research framework draws on decolonial theory (Lisa Lowe, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, Rita Segato), ecofeminism (Donna Haraway, Vandana Shiva, Val Plumwood), and food and cultural studies. Inspired by Macarena Gómez-Barris’s “inverted view,” the project challenges extractivist perspectives to reclaim our agency in sustaining life on Earth.²⁵ Within the specific realm of the digital humanities, *Banana Craze* adopts Patrik Svensson’s view of the digital humanities as a tool, lab, and site for activism.²⁶ Its web-based platform features alphabetical, geographical, chronological, and thematic search engines, plus open-access resources for interdisciplinary, nonlinear research. With a foundation in radical accessibility and intellectual hospitality, *Banana Craze* functions as a growing, open network that fosters collective knowledge and collaboration.

Many of the artworks featured on the platform employ strategies for the symbolic reparation of the obscured past associated with the cultivation, transportation, and consumption of bananas. This fruit carries a complex and multifaceted history. In Latin America, the banana symbolizes massacres, labor exploitation, gender inequality, racial segregation, coups, sexuality, and land dispossession, among other concepts. As Anna Arabindan-Kesson argues in relation to cotton, “it is a material with memory,” meaning that it carries the weight of a history tied to a specific past.²⁷ Similarly, we believe that the banana should be seen as a fruit with memory. And if it has a memory, it can also have a future, a positive future, even. Inspired by the concepts of critical fabulation and civil imagination, we envision and imagine a future where agricultural

workers are paid fairly, human and nonhuman rights are upheld, land is treated with care, and sovereignty is honored. To achieve this imagined future based on the memory of a fruit—a *fruiture*, as we propose—the past must first be redressed. One starting point for symbolic repair is the UFC photo archive, which is filled with another material imbued with memory. We ask: which contemporary strategies and practices can representationally repair archives as biased and steeped in unacknowledged inequality and violence as the UFC archive housed in the Baker Library? In the following sections, we will explore the innovative, symbolic, and creative strategies employed by contemporary artists in the *Banana Craze* project to mend such a fractured archive.

A Photo Book Changes the Narrative of a Photo Archive

In 2023, Spanish photographer Ana Núñez published a photo book titled *Hoja Bandera* (Flag Leaf; fig. 2).²⁸ It addresses one of Colombia's most traumatic and violent episodes in recent history, an event deeply ingrained in the collective memory of its people and remembered as the "Masacre de las Bananeras" (Banana Massacre). In 1928, the Colombian army, acting on behalf of the UFC, violently suppressed a strike by banana plantation workers who were demanding basic rights, including health insurance, compensation for work-related accidents, a 50 percent salary increase for lower-paid workers, weekly payments, and the establishment of sufficient hospitals. On December 6, in the small city of Ciénaga, soldiers opened fire on a peaceful gathering of strikers and their families, killing an estimated eight to 600 people, although the exact number remains disputed.²⁹ The massacre underscored the UFC's influence over local governments and became a lasting symbol of labor oppression and US imperialism in Latin America.³⁰

Núñez's photo book gathers 55 photographs and 19 documents related to the Colombian enclave and the aftermath of the Banana Massacre from the UFC archives, as well as 23 sentences taken from the testimonies of the victims of the massacre that originally appeared in the 1981 book *Sobrevivientes de las bananeras* (Survivors of the Banana Plantations) by Carlos Arango.³¹ Núñez's photo book is two books in one. When opened, the viewer discovers two books mounted on the inside covers. On the left is a book of phrases from the workers' testimonies, silkscreened on yellow, pink, and red paper, with texts such as "Soldier, join the strike! Soldier, we are your brothers!" "Even donkeys were killed that night," and "The army played the drums for five minutes." The book on the right contains photographs commissioned by the UFC which are now part of the Baker Library archive, alongside a selection of declassified company documents that narrate the aftermath of the massacre from a US perspective. The photographs are presented in a nonchronological sequence depicting the company's operations in Colombia, while the documents are arranged chronologically.

Each book begins with a logo. The one on the left inside cover corresponds to the logo of the Colombian Unión Obrera—a symbol of the emergent union movement that began in 1913. It consists of three eights forming a triangle. The eights represent how the union members imagined the workday should be divided: eight hours of work, eight hours of study, and eight hours of rest.³² The logo on the right inside cover is the first logo of the UFC. It shows a shotgun in profile, with the smoke coming out of the barrel forming the word "bananas," somehow announcing the future violence that the company would perpetrate. The two books beneath these two distinct logos operate under different codes, one linguistic and the other photographic.

Because there are no known images that record the lives and working conditions of the un-



2 Ana Núñez, *Hoja bandera*, 2023, photobook. Collection of the artist

derprivileged farm workers, Núñez turns to the written word to represent them. In this sense, she implements Hartman's notion of critical fabulation. Núñez is undoubtedly crafting a narrative grounded in archival research, while also offering a critical interpretation of the archive that mimics the figurative aspects of history.³³ Additionally, Núñez is narrating an incomplete story and emphasizing the impossibility of telling it.³⁴ At the same time, the photo book is an exercise of Azoulay's civil imagination, inviting us to consider the UFC photographs as an ongoing public event and to imagine the visible worlds not captured by the camera but certainly activated by it. In particular, the photo book invites us to imagine both the situation of the workers during the banana massacre and the violent response of the military in defense of the UFC. It also activates our imagination to foresee a possible different outcome, a *fruiturity*, by juxtaposing the workers' voices, the photographs, and the documents. In this sense, *Hoja bandera* inscribes itself in "the event of photography" that the images of the UFC triggered, that is, the circumstances that led to the creation of these photographs and all

the possible encounters with these photographs after they were made.³⁵

On page 44 of the photographic section, the apparently harmonious life on the plantation is interrupted by a series of photographs that, according to the captions, show the ruins of the UFC's infrastructure "after the revolution," referring to the workers' reaction following the Banana Massacre. These photos capture some of the company's destroyed buildings. Clearly, they were not taken after a revolution. They were taken after the workers and their families were attacked and murdered. The destruction of some UFC buildings was the workers' response to this atrocity.³⁶ Further lies become apparent when one closely examines the original captioning, particularly the dates. The photos were taken on 10 December 1928, three days after the massacre, meaning they do not document the exact moment when the alleged actions occurred, but rather that there was time to alter the scene. Indeed, several photos appear to have been partly staged. In the foreground of the picture titled "Ruins of M & S Bodega and Residence for Mdse. employees after Revolution," a sign reading



3 Ruins of M & S bodega and residence for Mdse. employees after revolution, Colombia, 10 December 1928, gelatin silver process on paper, 19 × 24.1 cm. Boston, Baker Library Special Collections and Archives, Harvard Business School

“United Fruit Company. Almacen Comisariato” (United Fruit Company. Commissary Store) appears directly in the photograph’s center, in front of the destroyed building (fig. 3).³⁷ It looks as if the photographer or an assistant placed the sign there to highlight who owned the building and thus bolster the impression that this was the result of the workers’ attack on the company’s infrastructure. In the photo book, the sequence continues, interspersing photos of the alleged attack with images of daily life on the plantation. The sequence ends with a series of photos showing a return to normalcy in the enclave: new buildings are being erected, tennis is being played, and bunches of bananas are being

shipped. Nothing has happened here, Núñez’s sequencing informs us with bitter irony.

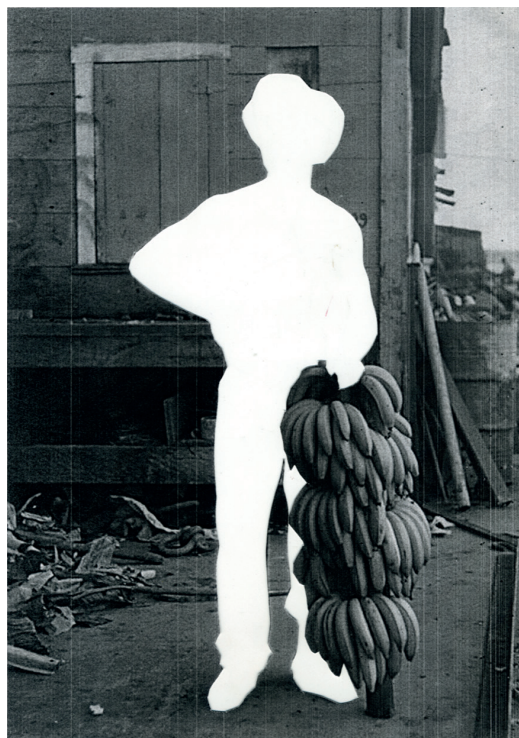
Copies of memoranda and telegrams written by US and UFC officials are interspersed with the photographs in the photo stack. Contrary to the arrangement of the photographs, these documents appear in chronological order. They tell the story of the massacre from the US perspective. It is striking how the number of deaths increases as one reads on. The first memo, dated 7 December 1928, gives the number of strikers murdered as 50. On 8 February 1929, US officials reported that the death toll “exceeded one thousand.”

The left, exclusively text-based stack consists of the victims’ words selected by Núñez. These

pages may focus on words, but Núñez makes important visual choices to enhance the words' meaning. In a conversation she had with one of us, she pointed out that the typeface she used in this section of the photo book is inspired by the Colombian conceptual artist Antonio Caro and his 1972 artwork *Aquí no cabe el arte* (Art has no place here).³⁸ In this text-based piece, Caro denounces the killing of student leaders, trade unionists, and indigenous peoples as a result of political persecution in Colombia.³⁹ Thus her chosen typography responds precisely to other future massacres committed by the government during Colombia's conflict-ridden twentieth century. Her use of thick paper for the stack and the serigraphy technique also respond to the materials and media used by workers and strikers in their protest signs as they demanded rights. In this work, then, Núñez uses material and visual strategies, as well as the archive itself, to advocate for the victims. She critically examines both existing and absent photographs, giving voice to the workers, thereby addressing the gaps in the archive and envisioning a better future, a *fruiturity*. By visualizing the voices of the workers and revealing the stark conditions within the enclaves, Núñez engages the reader's imagination and invites them to confront a deliberately erased history—while envisioning a new future for today's banana plantation workers. Furthermore, Núñez's work draws attention to the ways we have historically consumed both fruit and information, urging greater awareness of the political manipulation behind these processes and aiming to spark a more critical perspective moving forward.

A Photographic Cutout Gives Plantation Workers a “Day Off”

In her work, Caribbean-American artist Andrea Chung utilizes plantation photographs and archive repair strategies. In *Daylight Cum An' Mi Waan Guh*



4 Andrea Chung, *Daylight Cum An' Mi Waan Guh Home*, 2008, photographic cutout, 34 × 38 cm. Collection of the artist

Mi Waan Guh Home (2008), Chung explores her family's Jamaican/Chinese and Trinidadian heritage by examining archival materials such as photographs, postcards, and tourist publications to reconstruct past narratives of travel, migration, and enslavement (fig. 4). Interested in the frequent juxtapositions of nature and culture, and leisure and labor, in these resources, Chung examines the visual culture of colonial and neo-colonial regimes in island nations. *Daylight Cum An' Mi Waan Guh Home* is part of Chung's *May Day* series, in which the artist references International Workers' Day by conceptually giving workers depicted in late-nineteenth-century Caribbean photographs a “day off”—achieved by erasing their figures from the images.

An avid student of the history of the photographic medium, Chung is interested in how

photography, since its inception, has often omitted the reality of slavery, erasing it from the construction of historical narratives. For Chung, the Caribbean is a performative territory where, like history, the past is continually reinterpreted for consumption in the present, often reproducing colonial dynamics in the visual representation of place.⁴⁰ In the *May Day* series, the artist draws on a photographic corpus composed primarily of postcards that were created for the tourist industry to capture plantation life during slavery for the enjoyment of a white consumer. In this particular image, the body of a worker, presumably a Jamaican man of African descent, who rests his weight on a large bunch of bananas, is cropped so that the glowing white of the void created by his absent figure contrasts sharply with the gray background of the photograph. Behind him are a ramshackle wooden building and, on the ground, a pile of garbage. In this image that plays on the traditional visual associations in Western art between white as good and black as evil, Chung selects and modifies an image that once obscured the violent legacy of white culture by making the shape of what had been a Black body now glow with the white blankness of the cutout. The worker's labor must be whitened to get his deserved attention and rest, and this conspicuous whiteness draws attention to his work, which usually remains invisible. As for the bunch of bananas in this photograph, the fruit seems to offer itself to the viewer as a painterly fantasy, just as the Black body was originally photographed as an object to be consumed by the white gaze. Both the bananas and the worker carry the history of the African diaspora—uprooted from their places of origin (the worker as a descendant of enslaved African peoples, and the banana as a fruit originally cultivated in South Asia)—and forced to develop under the exploitative logic of white capitalism in a foreign and imposed context.

For this series of cutouts of the Black laborers who inhabited touristic photographs of late-

nineteenth-century Jamaica, as Krista Thompson points out, Chung used “reproductions of the photographs as they appear in historical accounts or online, rather than archival originals,” and she often “enlarged the images in ways that emphasize the ‘visual texture’ of their reproductive history—highlighting the pixels, grain, and lines.”⁴¹ In this case, the source for *Daylight Cum An’ Mi Waan Guh Home* is a 1940s gelatin silver print titled *Banana Worker* from the Wayne Stoffle Photograph Albums (originally belonging to US Navy Admiral Wayne Stoffle) at Tulane University’s Latin American Library. While its source is different, its aesthetics resonate with those of the UFC’s commissions.⁴² The portrait of the banana worker from the Wayne Stoffle Collection serves the same purpose as the photographs taken by the fruit multinational; the image hides all signs of labor while presenting both the man and the bunch of fruit as natural resources available to be consumed by the viewer.

These visual strategies, seen in both the Stoffle print and the UFC’s broader archive, underscore the visual conventions Chung critiques. For example, as Glenn Chambers has argued, Black laborers from the West Indies brought in by the UFC to endure harsh working conditions were the backbone of racially segregated banana plantations.⁴³ In some images, these workers appear nearly indistinguishable from the lush plantation foliage, visually blending into the landscape—naturalized within the “tropical picturesque.” Other photos depict workers standing in line at commissaries, infantilized as passive, dependent subjects. By contrast, interior shots of commissaries—described by Kevin Coleman as “contact zones” for cultural negotiation—are typically shown devoid of people, functioning instead as catalogues of imported goods (shoes, hats, pantry items), meticulously arranged and out of reach.⁴⁴ The only women present are young salesclerks posed as welcoming figures. Similarly, the few images of Black individuals in UFC archives include staged school photographs of



5 United Fruit Company second class school at Quirigua, Guatemala, 19 July 1927, gelatin silver process on paper, 20.3 × 25.4 cm. Boston, Baker Library Special Collections and Archives, Harvard Business School

laborers' children—orderly, obedient, and symbolically tied to the company's investments in infrastructure. These portraits also speak to the broader control and domination the UFC exerted over land and life on the plantations (fig. 5).

Chung's photographic series *May Day* explodes the rigid limitations of this type of photography, which restricts people of color to predetermined roles and renders them ever subject to the white colonialist gaze. Her work resonates with Hartman's strategy of "critical fabulation" by highlighting, even glorifying, the presence of Black bodies in archival photographs from late-nineteenth-century Central America and the Caribbean through bright white cutouts that

literally provide a blank space for imagining the individuals' subjectivities—both the multifaceted complexity of their realities and the inscrutable intricacy of their aspirations—while also freeing them from the fixed, suffocating place to which the original photograph had relegated them. In her work, Chung practices "civil imagination" and contests the "mode of visualization of labor as a future resource for exploitation [...] following a modern visual rhetoric of social engineering" that is present in the UFC and coetaneous photographs, as described by Gómez.⁴⁵ By removing the main subjects of the photographs, Chung not only symbolically offers them a day off but also opens space to imagine a future

in which Black labor is no longer invisibilized or taken for granted. In *Daylight Cum An' Mi Waan Guh Home*, her decision to leave the banana bunch prominently in view invites reflection on the fruit as more than a colonial commodity—transforming it into a symbol through which viewers can envision relationships of care, dignity, and equitable labor. This gesture aligns with the pursuit of restorative social justice by proposing a speculative space where extraction is replaced with rest, and consumption with recognition. This is the future-oriented thinking we call *fruiturity*. Moreover, Chung's partial erasure of the original photographic images makes other possibilities about the sitters' subjectivities visible and viable, triggering the viewer's invention of what might have been there that we cannot see in the photographs.

Rubble and Ruins Reconstruct the Memory of an Enclave

The vast body of photographs depicting the place where the life of the white elite developed and flourished is the flipside of the photographs depicting the spaces reserved for the Black population in the segregated UFC facilities. A prominent corpus of photographs within the UFC photographic archive is dedicated to housing and leisure facilities reserved for the white American, high-ranking employees of the UFC. General offices were several stories high and built with robust materials; they usually displayed some decoration on the facade and fashionable interior decor. The houses of "first-class employees" were spacious, modern, and comfortable when compared to the standard six-room labor camp. This in turn was also well equipped in comparison to the poor housing conditions of the straw and clay shacks that the company offered to fruit pickers.⁴⁶

The company's hierarchies of rank, wealth, social class, and racial identification were also palpable in employees' unequal access to the

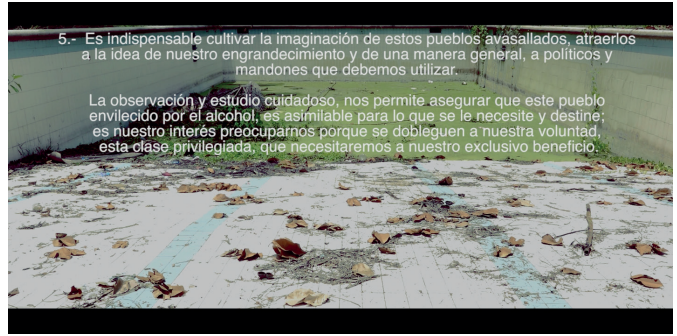
camp's leisure facilities. The UFC's classifications granted or denied different classes of workers access to various locations within the plantations, a system that, in Gómez's words "followed a modern visual rhetoric of social engineering."⁴⁷ Workers on the plantations and other spaces at the UFC enclaves were mostly photographed in "the acts of harvesting or constructing [and] always visualized as workforce."⁴⁸

Only "first-class employees" appear in the archive enjoying billiards, swimming pools, tennis courts, cricket and baseball fields, polo pitches, golf courses, picnics, barbecue parties, and costume balls, among the myriad of recreational activities available to them at the UFC enclaves. They even had opportunities to entertain themselves, for example by forming their own amateur orchestra. These photographs show the first-class employees' undaunted enjoyment of their tastes and hobbies, and their lack of assimilation with the local culture. Indeed, viewers of photographs of these employees and their families celebrating Thanksgiving and tap dancing to the rhythm of the popular 1890s song "The Sidewalks of New York" could be forgiven for thinking that those photographs had never left the US. These images of wellness and opulence disclose the UFC's hierarchized social conception of space, time, and culture. Following Gómez, these pictures "argue for cultural legitimization and a peaceful public image of the United Fruit Company's presence in the Caribbean," which, she rightly argues, was a message about "enclosing and culturally differentiating the contact zone" of the company when operating in the Caribbean and Central America.⁴⁹

In *Fotografías de las antiguas instalaciones de los campamentos de la UFC* (Photographs of the Former UFC Camp Facilities; 2014), a series of 12 photographs, the Colombian artist Elkin Calderón documents the abandoned buildings of the United Fruit Company in the banana region of Magdalena, Colombia, where the 1928 Banana Massacre took place (fig. 6). In the old company



6 Elkin Calderón, *Fotografía de las instalaciones de los antiguos campamentos de la UFCO*, 2014, photography, 50 × 37 cm. Collection of the artist



7 Elkin Calderón, *Video Carta Rolston*, 2014, video, 3:44

settlements, there are still traces of what life was like for the foreign workers: although they are in a state of ruin, the pool, a dance hall, a cinema, the hospital, and a few homes remain. Amongst the structures still standing, the old manor house where the foreign workers sheltered during the protests and the subsequent massacre stands out. There, one can still find objects, utensils, and furniture from the era, including crockery with the United Fruit Company insignia on it. These photographs of ghostly places evoke the tragedy of the region's history. The traces of luxuries that the foreign workers enjoyed contrast with the misery of the local inhabitants, which has been perpetuated until the present day: from the 1928 Banana Massacre instigated by the UFC to the liability judgement against Chiquita Brands—the rebranded successor of the UFC—in 2024 for financing a paramilitary group in Colombia.⁵⁰ Some of the home interiors depict an older man, the current occupant of one of the houses, humble in appearance, surrounded by an impoverished environment that accentuates the sadness of his gaze. With this series, Calderón draws attention to the abusive colonialist relationship that the US maintained with Colombia during the years that the UFC operated in the country, with consequences that are still evident.⁵¹ By documenting these once-luxurious, now-aban-

doned spaces, he also invites us to imagine their reappropriation. What would happen if today's agricultural workers in the region had access to these restored buildings? Is a *fruiture* of leisure shared and democratized possible in such a historically charged site?

In a related video project from the same year, *Carta Rolston* (2014), Calderón juxtaposes the image of an abandoned swimming pool with a text commonly known as the Rolston letter, allegedly written in 1920 by Hillyer V. Rolston, then deputy to Samuel Zemurray, managing director of the UFC, and addressed to the lawyer of the banana company's enclave in Honduras, Luis Mesera (fig. 7).⁵² In the letter, Rolston describes in detail the plans of the UFC to rise as a monopoly, seize the land at all costs, evade taxes, and defraud and abuse the population. Both the politicians and the Honduran population are discussed in a derogatory manner. Ever since its publication in 1949, this document has become a key point of reference in the history of Honduras—and of all the countries that experienced the abuse on the banana plantations—as it exposes the interests and abuses of the UFC. As the background of the video, Calderón uses the image of the destroyed swimming pool at the United Fruit Company's camp facilities in the Colombian Caribbean. The still image and

the sound of the abundant tropics are interrupted every so often by falling tree branches and other debris that someone outside the image throws into the swimming pool. The video does not explain until the very end the source of the montaged text, and thus something that is read in the present as fiction proves to be a historical document.

By documenting the abandoned remains of the company's settlements in his work, Calderón highlights the UFC's lack of real investment in the area: not only did they not make any structural improvements in the places where the company was established, but their disinterest in the locals' living conditions was such that they disregarded their architectural and urban heritage. Local governments perpetuated this neglect by not caring to preserve plantation architecture or give it another purpose of greater benefit to the population.⁵³ Continuing to follow Azoulay's concept of "civil imagination" as the consideration of photographs that were not taken or that we cannot see but that nevertheless trigger "the event of photography," Calderón's call for attention to the deterioration of the facilities exposes that the UFC photographs that reveal the company's promises of comfort and progress were indeed biased. Those images of care-free leisure enjoyed only by the privileged class of white American executives and their families concealed the gross and merciless abuse of plantation workers—a violence that continues to the present day, as the undisturbed ruins of the company elite's vacation homes in Calderón's photographs and video remind us. Through this strategy, Calderón's work—in dialogue with the corpus of works in the *Banana Craze* collection—symbolically repairs the omissions of the UFC archive, reminding the viewer of how ephemeral the moment of plenitude enjoyed by the company's expat elite was in comparison to the legacy of violence they left in the regions where they operated.

Banana Workers Unpack Archaeological Plundering

According to its capitalist logic, the UFC commodified nature through agriculture, archaeology, and the scientific study of botany to make the landscape more productive. Based on this logic, comparative analyses of fruits, fungi laboratory research, and pesticide spraying are widely documented in the UFC photographic archive, along with some topographic images of the local landscape. Indeed, these strategies put forward the idea of the UFC "as an important agent of modern science of the twentieth century."⁵⁴ Gómez has analyzed the company's archaeological site photographs held at Harvard University's Baker Library, which have not yet been digitized. Through them, she argues that the UFC made the Caribbean a laboratory of the modern "determined by the production of value, and formed by the exchange between cultures in an asymmetrical power-knowledge situation."⁵⁵ The photographs demonstrate how the company's development of archaeological excavations occurred in parallel to its harvesting of the land: four photographs included in her book show white men in "explorer" outfits posing against the Maya ruins of Quiriguá in Guatemala. The men pose as masters and owners of the ruins, leaning on them proudly, pointing out the details as if they were "decoding" them. This composition supports the idea of the white man as a scientist, discoverer, and civilizer of the Other's culture, who even dares to disrespectfully rest his rifle on the monumental stones. As Gómez has put it, "both activities, that of collecting archaeological objects and that of making natural commodities, are linked to the alteration of the environment and to the fact that the material landscape quintessentially embodies labor, as reflected in the labor-intensive agricultural operations and digging for ancient cultural objects."⁵⁶

Indeed, the UFC's harvesting of bananas at the plantations and its plundering of archaeo-



8 Leandro Katz, *Paradox*, 2001, video, 30:00

logical objects at excavations were among its many extractivist practices. Contemporary art's engagement with the visual legacy of the UFC has also explored how both actions—banana harvesting and archaeological plundering—imply a bias on the part of the company about its role as a civilizer of an underdeveloped society through its imposition of modern, capitalist agricultural practices and scientific research paradigms. *Paradox* (2001) is an experimental documentary video in which Argentine artist Leandro Katz explores the contradictions between the glorious past of Mesoamerican societies and the poor living conditions of their descendants in the very same place where the UFC archaeological photographs discussed by Gómez were taken (fig. 8).⁵⁷ In the video, Katz juxtaposes

shots of a Mayan altar popularly known as “The Dragon of Quiriguá” and scenes of workers on a banana plantation located in the same region of Quiriguá, in southern Guatemala. The video starts with a sequence of still shots of details of the Mayan stone monument, still preserved in a small jungle plot despite the deforestation produced by the banana companies. The video then jumps to shots showing the journey the banana bunches take, already cut from the plants and protected by plastic bags, while hanging from a precarious, gasoline-fueled transportation system that, we see, a single man controls. The video alternates between shots of the ruins and shots of the plantation workers who cut, wash, and pack the fruit. It includes portraits of the workers and images of children offering pictures

with exotic animals and souvenir miniatures of the monument to the camera.⁵⁸ The video ends with two striking sets of imagery. First, Katz shows us vintage postcards from the archives of the Museo de Antropología in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, which depict the long history of the development of banana monoculture in Central America. Second, we see engravings by Frederick Catherwood from the first explorations of Mayan ruins in the area, which speak to the long-standing US interest in plundering the indigenous archaeological past of the Americas. Katz's work connects past archaeological expeditions with contemporary tourism and links the tourist industry around the Dragon of Quiriguá and the banana business in the area as two forms of neocolonialism in which the UFC's "fantasies of 'civilizing' the spaces wrested from nature while legitimizing its economic expansion as a cultural project" have hindered the development of the region to the present day.⁵⁹

While Chung draws attention to the absence of a narrative about the Afro-descendants represented in the company's images, inviting us to imagine the pasts and possibilities of these subjects together with Hartman, Calderón points to the falsity of the UFC's narrative of progress, revealing the moral decadence of the project through photographs and videos of the decay of the UFC's building ruins, which speak to the company's dishonesty about meaningfully developing the areas where they operated. Katz's work, however, similarly to Núñez's, combines both theories. He confronts the visual culture of early twentieth-century Guatemala via tourist postcards and contemporary Guatemala through the documentary footage in his film. And in a suggestive combination of portraits and landscapes—which invites us to consider people and nature not as two sources for extractivism but as equal parts of a shared ecosystem—he creates a kaleidoscope that chronologically and geographically traverses the UFC's area of operation, from its arrival in Honduras in particu-

lar, and Latin America in general, to the present. Katz's portrayal of the footprint started by the UFC in Central America and the Caribbean aligns with the concept of the region as a laboratory of modernity for the company. It invites us to envision the *fruiturity* of this context—one rooted in archival disruption—to chart a path forward where the banana is viewed through a new lens.

The Possibilities Generated by the Encounter of Two Visual Archives

Our digital humanities research project *Banana Craze* explores how, in recent decades, contemporary artists have turned to the banana in their work as a visual marker that the "laboratory of modernity" experiment initiated by the UFC has left on the development of many Latin American nations. Thus, the recurrence of banana imagery in contemporary Latin American art today speaks to how the banana is a site, a source, and an idiom for tracing the economic, political, environmental, and identitarian problems suffered by the region—most of which trace back to the UFC's operations there—from the mid-twentieth century to the present.

Creators of their own imaginary, from Chiquita's mascot and Carmen Miranda's jingle to recipe books and merchandising, the UFC's photographic archive was part of the company's investment in a modern corporate visual culture integral to its vision of modern capitalism.⁶⁰ In this context, as Gómez states, "the banana tree as a visual marker of both the tropical and the plantation became a figure of ordering space that helped to imagine the modernization of the Caribbean."⁶¹ She argues that the UFC built "a laboratory of the modern" in the Caribbean because "the Company's economic advancement enabled the incorporation of the Caribbean into the orbit of Western knowledge," in which visual material—like photographic images—and visu-

alization strategies—including mass media circulation—are at the center of discursive, knowledge, and cultural production.⁶² Thus, as Tina Campt stated, drawing on her reading of Laura Wexler, we should read the UFC photographs “not only as records of choices but also as records of intentions.”⁶³ These intentions sometimes escaped the original purpose, allowing other narratives to emerge through “photography’s madness.”

In our reading of the contemporary artworks in *Banana Craze*, they engage with the visual legacy of the UFC photographic archive and contribute to repairing the archive’s omissions, exclusions, and absences. Through acts of civil imagination and critical fabulation, Ana Núñez, Andrea Chung, Elkin Calderón, and Leandro Katz resist, contest, and reimagine the photographic archive of the UFC. Following Campt, our essay aspires to “render the affective, sensory, and archival dynamics” of the images in both the UFC and the *Banana Craze* archives “in ways that enliven their complexities and their relevance and that demonstrate both why they matter and what the matter of the image might tell us about.”⁶⁴ By placing key examples of these two collections of images in dialogue, we also acknowledge how research and writing are always conditioned by the present from which one works and, in this sense, they embrace the creative discourses that arise when these two digital databases are linked through the repair strategies of photographic archives found in contemporary art.

The artworks discussed in this article each in some way awaken Barthian, Azoulayan, Hartmanian, and Camptian sensibilities. And they evoke an urgency to envision possibility through one of the world’s most ubiquitous fruits. They invite us to imagine a *fruiturism* not rooted in hope and aspiration but in what Tina Campt describes in her grammar of futurity: that which would have had to happen; that which has not yet occurred but must.⁶⁵

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1 In Latin America, race, and particularly whiteness, should be understood as an intersectional concept that is influenced by class and material culture, and not exclusively by skin color and other physical features. Cf. Hugo Ceron-Anaya, Patricia de Santana Pinho, and Ana Ramos-Zayas, A Conceptual Road to Whiteness, in: *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 18, 2022, no. 2, 177–199.
2 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, New York 2010, 13.

3 Christopher Pinney, Photographing or the Future of the Image, in: idem. (ed.), *Citizens of Photography: The Camera and the Political Imagination*, Durham 2024, 1–62, here 5.
4 Cf. URL: <https://bananacraze.uniandes.edu.co/language/en/obras/art/violences/david-lamelas-y-hildegarde-duane-2/> (last accessed 4 April 2025).
5 This essay uses both *repair* and *reparation* to reflect the layered meanings of the Spanish verb *reparar*,

- which encompasses both to fix or mend (*repair*) and to acknowledge and make amends (*reparation*). This bilingual nuance aligns with the bicultural identity of the authors and the translingual nature of the *Banana Craze* project. Our self-positioning within decolonial art history embraces these overlapping meanings as a way to critically engage with both the material and symbolic dimensions of historical damage, as well as the political urgency of addressing them.
- 6 *Banana Craze* allows visitors to customize their experience by using search criteria to filter and display specific information. For example, users can focus on a single country, a specific time period, or a selection of artists, leveraging search engines to tailor the content to their interests. Additionally, through public programs and our Instagram platform, audiences can actively engage with the project by reacting, contributing, and participating in meaningful ways.
 - 7 Ariella Azoulay, *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography*, London and New York 2012, 18–27.
 - 8 Saidiya Hartman, *Venus in Two Acts*, in: *Small Axe* 12, 7 June 2008, no. 2, 1–14.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, 11.
 - 10 Cf. Mark Dery, *Black to the Future*, in: Mark Dery (ed.), *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*, Durham 1994, 179–222; Alondra Nelson (ed.), *Afrofuturism* (Social Text 20, 2002, no. 2); Sandra Jackson and Julie E. Moody-Freeman (eds.), *The Black Imagination: Science Fiction, Futurism and the Speculative*, New York 2011.
 - 11 Liliana Gómez, *Archive Matter: A Camera in the Laboratory of the Modern*, Zurich 2023, 77.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, 78.
 - 13 *Ibid.*
 - 14 *Ibid.*, 72–73.
 - 15 *Ibid.*, 90.
 - 16 Cf. Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World*, Princeton 1997.
 - 17 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 72.
 - 18 There are still no clear records of how many people were assassinated in this massacre. Cf. Mauricio Archila Neira, *Primeras representaciones de la masacre de las bananeras*, in: Mauricio Archila and Leidy Jazmín Torres (eds.), *Bananeras: Huelga y masacre 80 años*, Bogotá 2009, 147–169.
 - 19 Cf. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Anglo-Saxonism*, Cambridge, MA and London 1981.
 - 20 This is a complex subject, but the coup d'état in Guatemala, in which President Juan Jacobo Árbenz was deposed, clearly exemplifies these links. The coup was orchestrated by the CIA and directed by the US government in alliance with the United Fruit Company. Cf. Roberto García Ferreira, *La CIA y el exilio de Jacobo Árbenz*, in: *Perfiles Latinoamericanos* 13, 2006, no. 28, 59–82.
 - 21 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 79–80.
 - 22 Kevin Coleman, *A Camera in the Garden of Eden: The Self-Forging of a Banana Republic*, Austin 2016, 74.
 - 23 According to the preliminary results of the latest Banana Market Review published by FAO in 2024, of the total 19.1 million tons of annual banana exports, 13.8 million tons come from Latin America and the Caribbean. Cf. URL: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/cf7d652b-d211-4f78-977f-a7525f80d906> (last accessed 10 February 2025).
 - 24 Cf. URL: <https://bananacraze.uniandes.edu.co/> (last accessed 6 June 2024). *Banana Craze* has received the support of Universidad de los Andes, Equifruit, and Banana Link.
 - 25 Macarena Gómez Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Durham 2017.
 - 26 Patrik Svensson, *Envisioning the Digital Humanities: The Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations*, in: *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 6, 2012, no. 1, 1–32, here 2.
 - 27 Anna Arabindan-Kesson, *Black Bodies, White Gold: Art, Cotton, and Commerce in the Atlantic World*, Durham 2021, 3.
 - 28 Description of the figure: upper left corner: cover of the book; upper center: display of the photo book as it is opened, showing the union's logo on the left and the UFC's logo on the right; upper right and bottom right: the book with the two stacks open; bottom left: sticker with the photo book's title; bottom center: the book open, showing one of the official documents released by the UFC on the right stack.
 - 29 Cf. Archila Neira 2009 (as in note 18).
 - 30 There is a great deal of literature on the repercussions of the interventions led by the United Fruit Company, including Virginia Jenkins, *Bananas: An American History*, Washington, DC 2000; Steve Striffler and Mark Moberg (eds.), *Banana Wars: Power, Production, and History in the Americas*, Durham and London 2003; John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*, Austin 2006; Dan Koeppel, *Banana: The Fate of the Fruit that Changed the World*, New York 2008; and Peter Chapman, *Bananas: How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World*, New York 2009.
 - 31 Carlos Arango, *Sobrevivientes de las bananeras*, Bogotá 1981.
 - 32 Cf. Renán Vega Cantor and Luz Angela Núñez Espinel, *Fundación de la Unión Obrera y la lucha por la jornada de ocho horas*, URL: <https://rebelion.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/La-fundacion-de-la-USO.pdf> (last accessed 21 June 2024).
 - 33 Hartman 2008 (as in note 8), 11.
 - 34 *Ibid.*

- 35 Azoulay 2012 (as in note 7), 18–27.
- 36 Kevin Coleman, The Photos We Don't Get to See: Sovereignities, Archives, and the 1928 Massacre of Banana Workers in Colombia, in: Daniel E. Bender and Jana K. Lipman (eds.), *Making the Empire Work: Labor and United States Imperialism*, New York 2015, 104–137, here 125–126.
- 37 Cf. URL: <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/images/olv-work719215/catalog> (last accessed 9 April 2025).
- 38 Conversation with Juanita Solano, February 2024. Cf. URL: <https://museolatertulia.com/obra/aqui-no-cabe-el-arte/> (last accessed 9 April 2025).
- 39 Gina McDaniel Tarver, *The New Iconoclasts: From Art of the New Reality to Conceptual Art in Colombia, 1961–1975*, Bogotá 2016, XXXIII.
- 40 Correspondence with the artist, 15 March 2023.
- 41 Krista Thompson, The Evidence of Things Not Photographed: Slavery and Historical Memory in the British West Indies, in: *Representations* 113, 2011, 39–71, here 64, URL: <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2011.113.1.39> (last accessed 9 April 2025).
- 42 Cf. URL: https://libguides.tulane.edu/afro_central_america/special_collections (last accessed 9 April 2025).
- 43 Cf. Glenn A. Chambers, *Race, Nation, and West Indian Immigration to Honduras, 1890–1940*, Louisiana 2010.
- 44 Coleman 2016 (as in note 22), 144.
- 45 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 64–65.
- 46 Handwritten notes in these photographs refer to housing and other constructions in terms of social classes such as “first-class employees.” The term “first-class” is used in the original caption of many of these photographs.
- 47 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 65.
- 48 Ibid., 87.
- 49 Ibid., 112–113.
- 50 Samantha Delouya et al., Chiquita Found Liable for Financing Paramilitary Group, in: *CNN Business*, 12 June 2024, URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/06/11/business/chiquita-banana-liable-paramilitary-group-colombia/index.html> (last accessed 19 June 2024).
- 51 Under different company names, the United Fruit Company has operated in Colombia for over a century. Cf. Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas, and Business: The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899–2000*, New York 2005.
- 52 Cf. Richard Lapper and James Painter, *Honduras State for Sale*, London 1985, 23–24. For doubts about the authenticity of the Rolston letter, the lasting impact of which derives from its rationalization of abuses happening in plain sight, see Darío A. Euraque, *Conversaciones Históricas con el Mestizaje y su Identidad Nacional en Honduras*, San Pedro Sula 2004, 112–115. The fig. 7 still shows a Spanish translation of the Rolston Letter; the original of the passage quoted elaborates that “It is indispensable to capture the imagination of these subjugated peoples, and attract them to the idea of our aggrandisement, and in a general way to those politicians and bosses that we must use. Observation and careful study have assured us that a people degraded by drink can be assimilated to the demands of necessity and destiny; it is in our interest to make it our concern that the privileged class, whom we will need for our exclusive benefit, bend itself to our will” (ibid., 23).
- 53 To the authors’ best knowledge, the facilities are currently abandoned. Despite diligent efforts to verify ownership and locate current property records, no definitive information about the present owner has been found.
- 54 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 47.
- 55 Cf. ibid., 42, 288–291.
- 56 Ibid., 270.
- 57 See URL: <https://vimeo.com/437311123> (last accessed 9 April 2025).
- 58 In his essay “The Paradoxes of Quiriguá,” Jesse Lerner discusses the miniaturization of the monument in the souvenirs shown in the film as tourism’s commodification of culture, and the fetishism inherent in looting and collecting. Cf. URL: <https://www.lean-drokatz.com/Pages/Paradox%20English.html> (last accessed 19 June 2024).
- 59 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 282.
- 60 Cf. John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*, Austin 2021.
- 61 Gómez 2023 (as in note 11), 95.
- 62 Ibid., 29–31.
- 63 Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*, Durham 2012, 6.
- 64 Ibid., 20.
- 65 Tina Campt, *Listening to Images*, Durham 2017, 17.

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