ALEX CHITTY

Entrely appoils, with moments of overlap

I British appoils a second of the second of

Process is key. The way we decide to go

all the difference. There is no ideal

Plenty of possibilities exist. Fossils

about doing something is what makes

way to squeeze juice from a citrus fruit.

preserving impressions of ancient leaves

suggest that citrus have been around

for over seven million years. For the

three-hundred-thousand-some-odd

years that humans have accompanied

citrus here on earth, it's safe to assume

on the inside, out. Any basic activity like

rial culture; centuries of decisions about

curious about the accumulation of tools

from a simple human task. eBay doesn't

automatically distinguish objects by the

year of their production, so I'm present-

ed with the full evolution of a thing over

that has ever been used to make some-

thing. eBay is shorthand for *Echo Bay*

Technology Group. The founder chose

eBay because the echobay domain

name had already been claimed by a

gold mining company. eBay is my per-

sonal quarry. Many of the objects and

images in my sculptures are not found,

but hunted. I don't always know exactly

what I will find when I begin to dig, but

it is usually obvious to me as soon as I

see it. Beyond the pleasure of seeing

decide to photographically represent

three-dimensional objects, eBay teach-

es me about cultures, materials, engi-

trends, and fluctuations in systems of

value. We've invented and produced all

kinds of juicers. Manual juicers. Electric

you in your hand. Juicers we turn inside

of the fruit or juicers that make you turn

the fruit instead. Metal juicers. Plastic

juicers. Porcelain juicers and juicers

made of glass. Every option takes a

certain amount of preparation, labor

and attentiveness. Expression is the

result of intentional actions.

My family is British, but I was born and

iuicers. Juicers meant to be used on

countertops or juicers you carry with

neering, design history, decorative

the full range of how other people

time. Every form, material and color

this will inevitably leave a trail of mate-

the most efficient or fashionable way

to do a simple thing. eBay is my pre-

and designed objects that can come

ferred research platform when I'm

that we've been trying to get what is

Basic Parts of the Fruit

Flavedo: The peel (containing oil glands)

Albedo (mesocarp): The spongy white layer between the peel

and the fruit

Endocarp: The actual fruit Membrane: The individual segments of the fruit

Vesicles: The juicy sacs (pulp)

Seeds (pips): The embryonic stage of a plant

Peel & Pulp

Every citrus fruit we eat could be an entirely new life experience if we know how to pay attention to it. I've learned to relish foods that require slow focus: bony fish, young steamed peas, soups, pomegranates, artichokes, anything with seeds or the need for cracking, breaking or peeling. Citrus are their own containers. This makes them highly portable and an easy snack for when you're on the move. After eating a lot of citrus, your body learns to peel and eat them without looking at what your hands are doing. The whole fruit can be consumed entirely by touch. Spitting out seeds becomes an auto-response No time lost.

Sometimes though, I slow everything down. I bring a grapefruit into the bath with me and divide it into smaller and smaller parts as I eat it. I separate out individual segments and tear open the waxy, transparent skin to reveal clusters of juice-sacs puzzled together inside. One by one, I extract the tiny, pink, elongated citrus bladders and use my tongue to press them into the roof of my mouth until they pop.

The range of textures, fragrances and flavors experienced from citrus are specific to the location of the tree and the precise placement of the fruit on its branch. Micro-shifts in soil, exposure to sun, shade, rainfall and frost determine how different traits express themselves. Temperatures can alter the color-tones of orange peels. Florida citrus groves have crops with greener skins because chlorophyll levels increase as sunlight and heat intensify. Citrus trees are responsive in real time. They calibrate themselves to compliment and counter the conditions of whatever is going on around them. Consciously, or not, we do the same thing.

Media Naranja

Something transformational happens when lush overlaps are discovered between seemingly unrelated things. In my sophomore year of college, I studied in Córdoba, Spain. The streets were planted with sour orange trees. A lot of the oranges in Spain are used for marmalades and liquors rather than for eating right off the tree. Depending on the time of year, I walked through the city surrounded by the scent of orange blossoms, or the tangy stench of hot rotting fruit. It was in this place that I took my first Art History class. Everything was taught in a language I hadn't fully learned yet, so I learned to distinguish periods of Art History by their Spanish titles and later translated them into English. This is relevant because the process emphasized the fact that the words we now use to define the progression of art were invented by someone. Realizing this made all the imposed distinctions feel arbitrary; disciplinary divisions, and the start and stop of chapters in Art History appear approximated rather than factually conclusive. It's similar to how scientists went about naming the natural world. The stars are real, but the constellations are pure imagination. Everything is what it is because of how it has been described by the limited perspectives of the persons selected to do so.

The 80-year-old woman who shared her home with me in Córdoba used a particular phrase when speaking about my romantic partner: Media Naranja half orange—the logic being that no matter how you slice a single orange into two parts, these halves can precisely match only each other. They look the same but are exactly opposite. Each reminds us of the other, but they differ in the small and significant ways that let them slot seamlessly back

together, forming the illusion of a whole. Entirely opposite, with moments of overlap. I make no definitive statement about the appropriateness of the term or its application, but the sentiment is one I find myself returning to. I don't commonly use it in the way that it relates to intimacy or romantic love between two independent beings. It's more of a mechanism for pointing out the moments where life flawlessly comes together. When things finally click. A temperature of light and an emotion so well matched you can't be sure which was born of which. A long thread of internal thoughts and personal theories, confirmed and illuminated with a single sentence written by a stranger over a hundred years ago. These are the moments I

keep an eye out for in this line of work. Preserved Lemons Preserving lemons requires salt, a clean, resealable jar and lots of time. It only takes a couple of hours to clean the fruit and the jars, cut the lemon wedges, press them into salt and submerge them completely in their own juice. That's not what takes the time. The next step of turning the jars upside down and right side up again only needs to happen for a week or two. This activity distributes the salt and eliminates most unwanted bacteria, while creating the ideal saline environment for the good stuff. Lactobacillus bacteria consume fruit sugars and make lactic acid, which serves as a natural preservative. Next, olive oil is poured into the top of the jar. This seals off the contents from the air between the lemons and the lid. Then the jar is left in the dark. And you wait. This is what takes the time. It can be one to three months, or more. Everything relies on balancing the micro-culture inside of the jar so it self-automates and the lemons transform themselves. I made my first batch sometime during the pandemic. I liked the idea that even when I had a hard day at the studio where nothing seemed to get done, I was in fact making great progress back at home by just leaving the jars alone in the dark. The lemons effortlessly used every second of my wasted day.

I consistently work to improve the specific micro-culture of my studio so that at the end of a session, I can flip off the lights, walk out, lock the door behind me and leave everything to keep working on itself. I'm not expecting to enter my studio the next day and find everything in a slightly different location having spent the night tinkering. It's more that I want the creative and logistical aspects of running a studio practice to become a cohesive self-sustaining broth from which, and within which, my work can emerge. This only comes from pushing the pedal a little bit every single day. Not constantly working every second of every day, but understanding that just like all other biological events, there are seasons and everything will take the time that it takes. You really can't rush this kind of stuff. It took me years to realize that a studio practice has cycles; requiring spurts and spits of activity. Hibernation leads to production, and consumption is linked with periods of

fermentation and pause. So much of the

have nothing whatsoever to do with the

art world is based on timelines that

creative process. You figure out the

ratios you want and bare your sharp

that you want your practice to be an

by the enterprise of life, it will require

evolving, thriving thing, influenced

consistent agitation. You work, you

watch, you re-assess and alter, you

to just keep being one.

Orange

wait, and then you go to work again.

One of the best ways to be an artist is

I adore the redundancy of the language we

use in relation to oranges. The word

orange is an adjective, a noun and a

proper noun. The color is named after

the fruit. Not the other way around. If

you physically track the etymology of

the word orange, you'll orbit the globe

Asia, European languages had no name

for the color orange. Hundreds of years

described by verbally mixing reddish

and yellowish adjectives. But when the

never-before-seen fruit arrived, it was

like the sun. Before traders brought

oranges elsewhere from Southeast

passed where orange hues were

teeth at anything that tries to tweak it

too far out of sync. If you've determined

such a clear example of its own color that it defined itself completely. Today, when we see an orange in a black and white photograph we are forced into thinking of the precise word that slams it back into full color again. I printed multiple copies of the same image and taped them (image-out) to the windows in my studio. It's a photograph I took in Brussels of a stacked pile of orange halves. They are squeezed dry of their juice and swarmed by bees. I am waiting to see which combination of ink and paper will fade the magenta inks just enough so that the cyan stands proud. Over time, the western light will turn my oranges blue (Fig 1).

Juice Juice is a survival strategy. It's a cunning adaptation aimed at ensuring the reproductive success of any plant. The more delicious the juice, the more likely it is that the fruit will be picked and moved somewhere new to disperse the seeds. Squeezing juice from any citrus fruit requires external pressure. Once the fruit is sliced you can use your hands to do the rest. Citrus fruit and human hands have no direct evolutionary connection, but the pairing of the two is undeniably elegant. I was once seduced by the sight of a bartender making a greyhound cocktail. Under dim light, they sliced a grapefruit in two. Palming one half in their hand they touched the wet, open face of the fruit to the outer edge of a low glass and slipped it around the circumference of the rim. With the same half-grapefruit held vertically above the ice, the bartender rotated the fruit clockwise by walking the pads of each finger, one after the next, across the skin. In the pauses between each partial turn, they flexed to tighten their grip. A natural spout puckered at the base of the grapefruit half and juice funneled out. When the two edges of the cut rind pressed together like closed lips and the liquid slowed to a trickle. Still clutching the spent fruit in one hand, they used the other to stir the drink with a long-handled spoon. Finally they took a sharp blade and raked it hard across the peel. Hundreds of embedded oil glands burst open and a silver, zesty scent showered over the cup and into the room.

raised in a part of South Florida that is predominantly Cuban. We had a giant grapefruit tree and a spiky, key lime tree in the backyard. One neighbor across the street had a low growing citrus tree that produced four species of fruit. Their grandfather had grafted four distinct types of citrus branches onto the main trunk. Growing seeds from any of those original fruits would eventually produce entirely new variations of citrus. The fruits can only be exactly replicated by grafting the vegetative matter from the original branch. British people call certain seeds pips.

When you whisper or softly say the word pip, your breath and lips follow the same choreography they would if you were trying to blow a tiny hair out of your mouth. I affectionately refer to small cumulative things like seeds as PDFs; so much data, effort and time compressed into the smallest possible space. All kinds of objects have this characteristic; they are reservoirs of embedded narratives and tangential histories. I cast pips, nuts and seedpods into brass, bronze and aluminum for use in my

sculptures. Seeds are self-sustaining. They hover in place, pulsing steady with potential and delaying the progression of time. I'm drawn to them, and other objects that behave in the same way because they simultaneously point in opposing directions on a timeline. Their presence indicates two types of absence. They are trace evidence of things that have already happened; visual proof of prior events. But they also project into the future; housing

silhouettes in tentative shapes of the

lives that haven't happened yet.

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*blue text indicates direct and indirect references to my process and practice

Citrus in Art

Casa del Frutteto (House of the Fruit Orchard), Pompeii, Italy, c. 150 BCE.



Zhao Lingrang (趙令穰), Yellow Oranges and Green *Tangerines*, c. 1070-1100. lnk and color on silk; 9 ½ × 9 in $(24.1 \times 22.9 \text{ cm}).$



Jan van Eyck, The Arnolfini Portrait, 1434. Oil paint and oak; 32×24 in (81.3 × 61 cm).



Willem Kalf, Still Life with Fruit and Wineglasses on a Silver Plate, 1659-1660. Oil on canvas; 19 1/5 × 16 1/10 in $(49.3 \times 42.9 \text{ cm}).$



Édouard Manet, Four Mandarin Oranges, 1882. Oil on canvas; $7 \% \times 9 \%$ in $(8.4 \times 24.1 \text{ cm})$.



William Joseph McCloskey, Oranges in Tissue Paper, c. 1890. Oil on canvas; 10 × 17 in $(25.4 \times 43.2 \text{ cm}).$



Édouard Vuillard, Woman in Black, c. 1891. Oil on cardboard; 10 % × 8 % in $(26.8 \times 21.9 \text{ cm}).$



Broncia Koller-Pinell, *Marktfrau* Mit Orangen Um, 1908. Woodcut in color on Japanese rice paper; 10 1/4 × 25 1/4 in (26 × 64.1 cm), sheet dimensions 19 \times 22 in (48.3 \times



Henri Matisse, Lemons on a Pewter Plate, 1926. Oil on canvas; 21 ½ × 26 1/8 in (54.6 × 66.4 cm).

Pierre Bonnard, Le Petit

Dejeuner, 1917. Oil on canvas;

25 % × 18 ¼ in (63.5 × 45.7



Georgia O'Keeffe, Grapefruit and Endive, 1930. Oil on canvas; 8 ½ × 10 ½ in (20.6 × 26.7





Ellsworth Kelly, Grapefruit (Pamplemousse), from suite of plant lithographs, 1966. 23 $\frac{7}{16} \times 20 \text{ in } (59.5 \times 50.8 \text{ cm});$ sheet: 35 3/8 × 24 1/4 in (89.9 × 61.6 cm).



Fernando Botero, Naranja (Orange), 1977. Oil on canvas; 64 × 48 × 2 ⅓ in (162.56 × 121.92 × 5.715 cm).



David Hockney, Lemons and Oranges, 1986. Homemade print executed on an office color copy machine; edition of 50, 8 ½ × 14 in (21.6 × 35.6 cm).



Peter Doig, Lemons, 1989. Oil on canvas; 30 × 20 in (76 × 64 cm).



Gabriel Orozco, Crazy Tourist, 1991. C-print; 12 ½ × 18 ¾ in $(31.8 \times 47.6 \text{ cm}).$



Wolfgang Tillmans, Still Life *Talbot RD*, 1991. C-print; 12 × 16 in $(30.5 \times 40.6 \text{ cm})$.

Seeds



Zoe Leonard, Strange Fruit (for *David*), 1992–1997. Sutured fruit skins; dimensions variable.



Gabriel Orozco, Home Run, 1993. Instruction to the neighbors of MoMA to place an orange on a glass in the windows facing the museum.



"Louise Bourgeois - Peels a Tangerine," 1998. YouTube, uploaded by ZCZ Films, 17 Feb 2013; https://youtu.be/ M2mx1gZqh1E?si=SXq1s vzt0e78GTwB.



Melanie Schiff, Lemon Tree, 2012. Inkjet print on paper; $36 \times 28 \%$ in (91.4 × 73 cm).



Camille Henrot, Grosse Fatigue, 2013. Color video with sound; 13 min.



Alex Chitty, Everything is the same except for that one thing, 2015. Mounted inkjet print, laminated plywood, glass and steel clips; 39 × 28 $\frac{1}{2} \times \frac{3}{4}$ in (99.1 × 72.4 × 1.9 cm).



Hernan Bas, The Sunday snail

race, 2015. Acrylic on linen;

 84×72 in (213.4 × 182.9 cm).





Alice Tippit, Bling, 2023. Oil on canvas; 13 × 10 in (33.02 × 25.4 cm).



Copper-plated watch







