

FOOD PORN

Food Porn is a notion that dates back to the 70s when it was used to describe food perceived as unhealthy and thus sinful or forbidden by comparing it to pornography. In contemporary culture and through the rise of online culture and social media the notion gained new meaning. #foodporn puts the representation of food in the center of interest. The display of food in a way that is aesthetically and physically appealing became a new trend, mainly throughout platforms such as Instagram, Flickr, Facebook or Twitter.

Critics claim that in food porn there are similar problems as in classical porn: Food can be used as an expression of social classification and differentiation. The glorification of a particular, wealthy lifestyle is represented as something universally stimulating, while only a small percentage of people have access to it. Similar mechanisms as what is described as the male gaze in classical pornography - the view through only one particular perspective - are at play here.

A second point of criticism deals with its idealistic and aestheticized representation. As in classical pornification, where bodies have to be perfect according to an external beauty ideal and thus are mostly beautifully styled, lit and/ or retouched, photography considered as food porn often follows the same rules. Feminist critic Rosalind Coward writes in her 1984 book *Female Desire*:

„Cooking food and presenting it beautifully is an act of servitude. It is a way of expressing affection through a gift... That we should aspire to produce perfectly finished and presented food is a symbol of a willing and enjoyable participation in servicing others. Food pornography exactly sustains these meanings relating to the preparation of food. The kinds of picture used always repress the process of production of a meal. They are always beautifully lit, often touched up.“ (p. 103)

FRUIT PORN

But there are a three female artists who invented a new genre that takes over the pornification of food, using it as a tool for the emancipation and representation of female desire and sexuality. Through “Fruit Porn“ they create a female gaze that uses the fruit as a substitute for an explicit presentation of bodies in sexual interaction. Arousal is created through the power of suggestion by the imagination instead of the representation of what sex should ideally look like.

The artists Julia Patey and Lucie Aron describe their aim like this:

„It’s a new way to make porn that gives the viewer a more active role. The purpose of porn is to excite the viewer. We didn’t think showing what sex looks like from the outside was the best way to turn people on. We wanted to show sex from a subjective, inside point of view to get closer to the root of excitation, to make it more personal. There is a lot of room to play within this genre and we’re both really looking forward to seeing how it develops.“

Still it seems to be shocking enough for many to call for Instagram to ban the photos as well as the account of the artist Stephanie Sarley several times. Mainly male users write angry or **disparaging** comments. She created a series of photos and videos where you see her fingering different fruits. Just showing a close up of the fruit and her hands is completely non-explicit, but at the same time shockingly direct. Sarley states:

“I didn’t invent fingering fruit. It’s a natural thing to finger things, to play with your food. But, what I invented was a compelling video that meant something to people, about menstruation and virginity and sex and love.“

SOURCES:

Rosalind Coward: *Female Desire*. Paladin, 1984, p. 103

Interview with Stephanie Sarley:

<https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/stephanie-sarley-fruit-fingering-art-instagram/>

Interview with Julia Patey & Lucie Aron:

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/27251/1/watch-fruit-and-sex-collide-in-this-sensual-video>

ABOUT MY ARTISTIC WORK:

In spring 2018 I was asked to create a photo essay for a magazine edited by the Arts University in Graz, where I was studying some years ago. The issues' topic was "Desire" a notion which for me is not only - but strongly - connected to sexuality. I was interested in dealing with it in a way that provoked associations of a sexual nature without explicitly showing bodies in a sexualized way.

That was when I came up with the idea of substituting the body or sensations of the body with food, mainly fruits. My series of photos is an attempt to express or show the feeling of desire, pleasure or arousal through the composition, arrangement and framing of different fruits, ice cream, milk and several kitchen tools.