

Kazi & Kazi Tea: Dhaka, Bangladesh

Britto Arts

Dhaka Airport

rport

Dubai Airport

Dubai bus station

M32

Cuba Microbial

polytechnic

M4

Leicester

Bristol Temple Meads

LHR

Govindas Restaurant

London Paddington

an Paolo

Mumbai

London St Pancras

Gujarat

Brussels Midi

Daniel: Diller, 1981

team: E

Feral Trade

Kate Rich

Feral Labelling

by Femke Snelting

"Onward transit of FER-1327 from Codecano arrived Cube Microplex 2007-07-25 kate rich 20/6/07"

Shipment pallet delivered by forklift, boxes were all present but many were opened and the coffee bags looked rummaged. Forklifters kindly reweighed the shipment (252 kg) and recorded the pickup as damaged. Drive home was gloomy yet aromatic. Arrived Cube at midnight, unloaded 1/4 metric tonne coffee into the under-auditorium-seating area. Coop had miscompiled the order as 175kg ground coffee and 75kg beans, the reverse of my emailed order; the ground coffee was also ground too coarse. Emailed Ricardo shipping report then went home to sleep.[1]

As food is seldom consumed when and where it was found, it needs wrapping into other materials before it can travel. Bulk ingredients packaged in batches move across long distances; they are stacked, stored, sorted and sold. Packaging is the result of an uneasy compromise between people and their machines, negotiating industrial wants with the more convoluted desires of individual customers, so that products roll off a food grade conveyor belt as smoothly as they fit into a biodegradable shopping bag or a kitchen cupboard. But besides physical protection, packaging offers a convenient surface on which to project messages about the product or even about the package itself. Food labelling is a means of communication between the many parties involved in the way food gets around; each of them leaving traces that represent their own interest in what is or what is not inside.

When a new product is added to Kate Rich's Feral Trade product range, packaging is a factor to be reckoned with. As the goods are mainly passed by hand, size matters, for example, in relation to the volume that is allowed as carry-on luggage. In addition, its container needs to be tough enough to resist the unpredictable conditions that might occur on non-freight routes. But above all Feral Trade products, as well as their packaging, make the experience of trading tangible.

It's 1986. In a conference centre in the Netherlands, shopkeepers of various local Fairtrade shops gather for a long meeting.[2] The single item on the agenda is a proposal to launch a new brand, Max Havelaar, named after a bestselling 19th century novel about the exploitation of Javanese coffee plantation workers by Dutch colonial merchants. Solidaridad, the country's largest importer of Fairtrade coffee and initiator of the brand, is under pressure from Mexican coffee growers who demand access to a larger market than the autonomously and rather amateurishly run shops will ever be able to provide. The shopkeepers

present at the meeting respond with mixed feelings, voicing their predictable worries about the risk of brushing with mainstream retail, and wondering how this brand will be able to increase sales and still guarantee the fairness of the trade.

The main anxiety though, is that once the coffee is sold in supermarkets, it will be hard to communicate the complex story of provenance that comes with it. Outside the narrative context they have carefully built in their small-scale, volunteer-run spaces, the packaging will be too tight a space to make up for the loss. By the end of the day, the argument for market expansion is more convincing. Solidaridad settles for a logo with a hand drawn portrait of a Mexican farmer carrying a bag of raw coffee beans. More than 20 years later, after an indecisive interlude, the brand is redesigned by a London agency[3] in an attempt to rationalise packaging and streamline marketing.

Again, after much discussion, the Max Havelaar foundation chooses a human figure but this time it is depicted in the form of an abstract swoosh representing both producer and consumer.

Feral Trade promotes its coffee proudly as 'non-certified organic', a community guaranteed label that is established through shifting social processes instead of relying on external quality assurance. Keeping with the same ethos of undefined definition, the hybrid philosophy behind the design for the packaging of Montenegrin Delight fits with the variable graphic styles of the Feral Trade product range: "The original owner of the company designed the box art himself on his home computer to connect tradition with modernity." [4] Without a consistent brand identity, another layer of information is added to the many types of messages that are already conveyed by the diverse packages in the Feral Trade range. Sometimes attached as a label, often available through the Feral Trade website, customers can find a detailed breakdown of costs and also a full track record of each shipment. The information is retrieved from a custom made database in which Feral Trade shipping agents offload e-mails, reports, faxes and freight documents gathered along the way. Making the bureaucratic nightmares of international cargo legible, customers are offered a form of transparency that is not necessarily reassuring. In a parody on EU-regulated nutrition labelling, the supplied information here produces an active position, where unexpected events and, sometimes, undesirable results are to be taken into account.

To bring up the debate about Fairtrade labelling in the context of the Feral Trade project is, to say the least, a little uncomfortable. But even if their respective scales, aims and ideas are of a different nature, such a comparison might help to understand how to reveal complicated stories of origin and destination, without falling into the trap of pairing authenticity with reliability. Feral Trade's unpredictable appearance offers an occasion to come into contact, proposing both a recording and a constitution of

social networks. The precision of its design is in the persistent choice for the kind of leaky containment that allows narratives of trade to permeate through.

From: http://www.furtherfield.org/displayreview.php?review_id=349

Notes

1 http://www.feraltrade.org/coffee/correspondance/shipment7/grind_disaster_07_26_2007_16:45:27-600

2 'The Max Havelaar Crisis' is documented in the interactive timeline 40 Jaar Wereldwinkel (40 years of Fairtrade shops), available at <http://nieuw.wereldwinkels.nl/nl/pages/Tijdslijn>

3 From marginalized to mainstream. We helped make the Fairtrade brand highly visible. Interbrand website, http://www.interbrand.com/case_study.aspx?caseid=1101

4 Montenegrin Delights as advertised on the Feral Trade website <http://www.feraltrade.org>

TEA STORY

a Feral Trade initiative.

To track a single product to source, to better understand its provenance.

The story begins with a chance encounter at the Agora supermarket, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Kazi & Kazi Organic tea stands out from shelves of universal product.

First stop along the route to origin was product headquarters, the Kazi & Kazi corporate offices in central Dhaka, where Marketing Manager Mr Khan was pleased to explain the origins of the tea, first planted by the company in only 2000 but already exclusively served at the Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Mr Khan described the tea garden in Tetulia: lush, virgin land in northmost Bangladesh, only 50 kilometers from Darjeeling. Kazi's parent company, Gemcon, first bought land there in the 1980's for manufacturing concrete electricity poles. Now they're the first substantial organic tea producer in the country.

Anconia ferry terminal

Ancona station

Bologna station

Bergamo station

Bergamo hotel

Bergamo Airport

Ber...

San Salvador

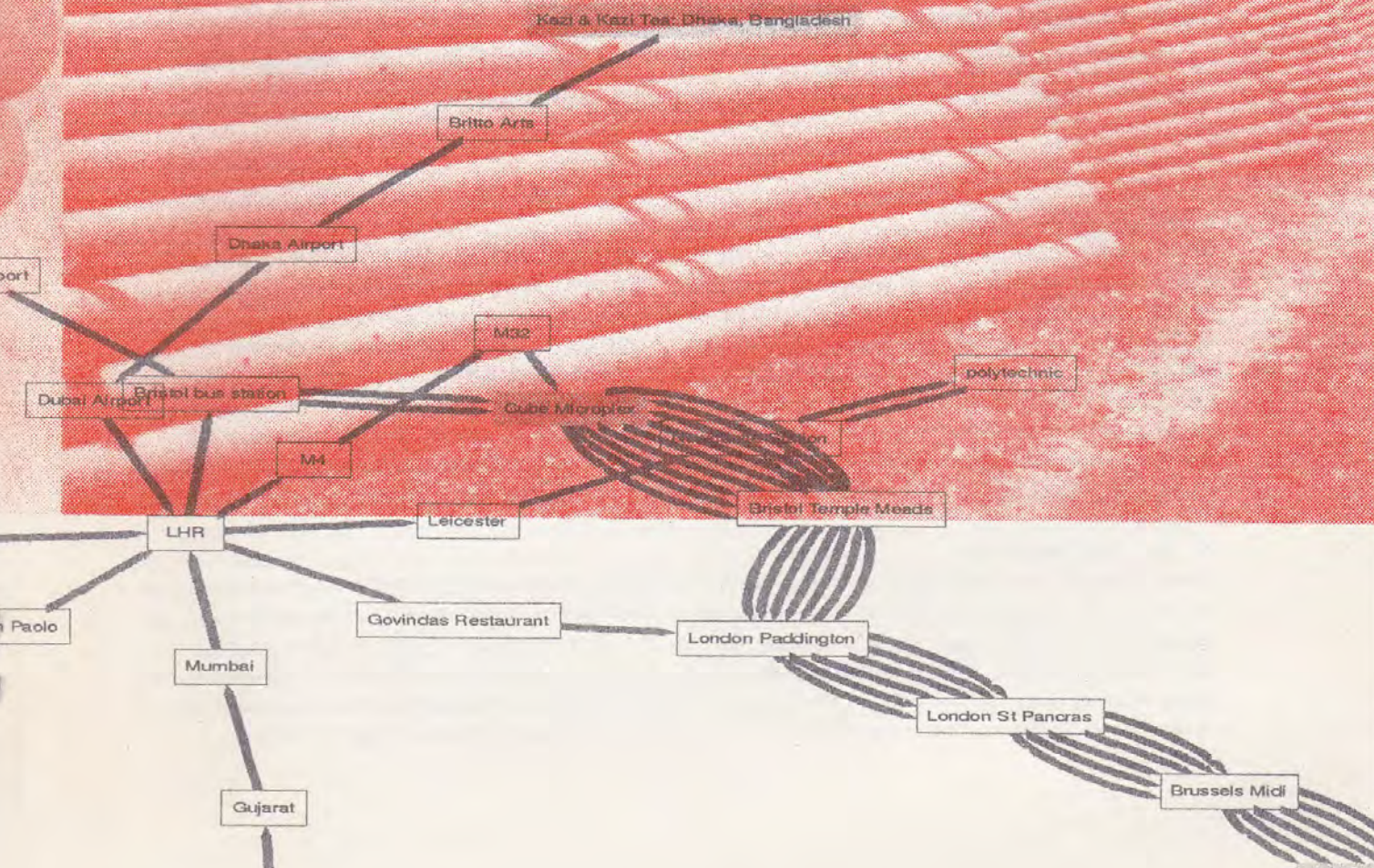
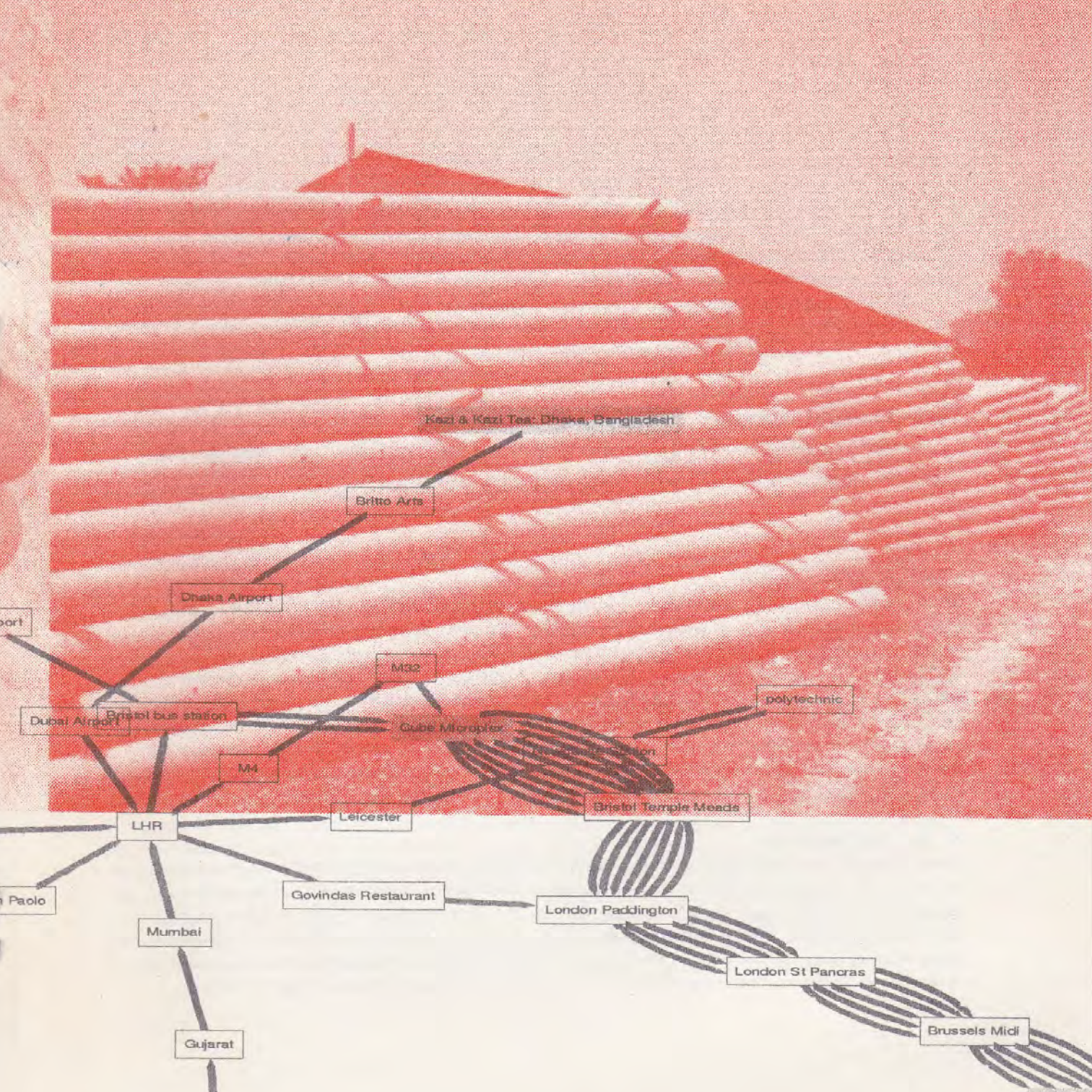
SAL

ATL

LGW

Bahia

Codecano: San Pedro Nonualco. El Salvador



"Do you play badminton?"

Evenings at the compound, the management employees play badminton. The scores are called in English, as per tradition. The net is supported by concrete poles. Finance manager Mr Hye and paralegal Mr Rahul played with a particular ferocity when the electricity cut out half way through the match, the players retired in total darkness.

Feral Hamper Xmas 08

A curated grocery box of ferally-sourced goods, hand-sourced from their producers and transported internationally using moving social networks for freight.

Contents:

1. Coffee from El Salvador

Feral Trade is an artist-run grocery business trading goods over social networks since 2003. It emerged from an impulse to secure relationships with key commodities using only email and mutual acquaintances. This coffee was sourced from Cooperativa de Caficultores Nonualcos R.L. (CODECANO) in El Salvador via an old friend's sister's colleague. The coffee is ordered by email and bank transfer, roasted and packaged in London and driven to the airport in San Salvador by CODECANO farmers. Shipments are sent to London Heathrow airport by Feral Trade and transported via motorway to the Cube Microplex Bristol where it is warehoused for onward distribution under the cinema seating. Circulated entirely by hand baggage across UK, Europe, Australasia and North America since 2003, the El Salvadorian coffee is the core currency of the Feral Trade project.

2a. Tea from Bangladesh

A new product, discovered on a supermarket shelf in Dhaka, Bangladesh and followed back to source in order to better understand its provenance. A journey to the heart of obscurity to trace the motives, methods, means and morals of the contemporary commodity. This single-estate Orange Pekoe tea is eco-farmed in Tetulia, remote north Bangladesh by Kazi & Kazi Tea Estates, offshoot of the Gemcon group of companies. Whilst only on the market since 2006, K&K Tea are already exclusive tea suppliers to the Dhaka Sheraton. The tea garden is the personal vision of Gemcon Chairman, former Army

colonel Kazi Shahed Ahmed. On visiting the tea garden - Anandogram which means Pleasurevillage - Feral Trade was shown formerly arid lands regenerated by herbal shade trees, cows producing organic biogas, an Ayurvedic research centre and 8000 pre-stressed spun concrete electricity poles awaiting deployment around the country. Gemcon have been manufacturing poles here since the mid 1980s and are sole electric poles provider to to the Bangladeshi Government. Their corporate compound in nearby Panchagar where Feral Trade stayed as company guest, was originally bought as land for mining sand and stones for the poles, a now illegal activity due to massive local desertification brought on by humus collapse. The tea was purchased direct from Mr Khsan, marketing director at the Gemcon corporate HQ in Dhaka, Bangladesh and flown back to UK in Feral Trade's Emirates hand luggage.

2b. Neem from Bangladesh

Neem, grown in its millions as shade trees on the K&K Tea Estate. The perfect convergence of ayurvedics and capitalism, every part of the plant is used. On the Kazi estate, the Managing Director's residence is built entirely from neem wood. Mainly grown for oils for pesticides, antibacterial and beauty products. Highly concentrated and bitter, use with care.

3. Salt from Gujarat

The Feral Trade salt originates from the coastal plains of Gujarat in western India. On a visit to their native state Gujarat, Mr and Mrs Solanki (parents of Feral Trade Agent Sneha Solanki) travelled to the infamous town of Dandi in an attempt to salvage natural sea salt from Dandi beach. Dandi was the concluding point of Ghandi's Salt Satyagraha (Salt March) in 1930, an illegal act of direct action against the high taxation on salt by the British colonial rule. As there was very little salt available to harvest from Dandi beach Mr and Mrs Solanki brought this Gujarati salt from a small local chemist. The salt was packed in their luggage and freighted Dandi to Brussels via Gujarat, Mumbai, London, Leicester, Newcastle, Bristol and London.

4. Grappa from Croatia

A kitchen style rakija (Croatian for grappa) sourced from its infusion lab at the home of Mrs Danica Kuzmanovic. Danica and her late husband Nika started their rakija infusions as a hobby several decades ago, for medicinal, as well as social and (as hey call it) 'recreational' purposes. The clear grape spirit (lozovaca) is sourced from a few of their friends who own vineyards, sell grapes and wine. From the remaining wine skins they make the clear spirit that they sell to the locals from their cellar door. In their own words, this grappa is too strong and rough for the tourists and has therefore not made it to the mainstream market. The locals, such as the Kuzmanovic family, like their grappa to be at least 52% and burn its way down to the stomach. Mr Kuzmanovic (a physicist of Serbian origin living in Croatia) had

difficulty finding paid work during the war in the 1990s (he believed this was due to his nationality). He started bartering his programming skills for sustenance products, such as bread and meat, but also grappa. Although the currency did re-enter the exchange towards the beginning of the new century, for several years the grappa was traded for door-to-door software development and system administration. After Nika's death in 2007, Danica took over the production of infusions, adding new, more complex and subtle flavours to the drinks.

The family's love and knowledge of local ecological habitats takes them foraging for mushrooms and other edible plants in the rich Istrian landscape, teeming with both mediterranean and continental vegetation. Infused rakija became one of the ways to preserve the herbs, mushrooms and fruit, to enjoy them throughout the year. Every season brings forth new flavours - from herby spring grappas like fennel, sage, or the signature blend of 18 medicinal herbs; to fruity summer collections including sour cherry and cherry dogwood; to nutty and sweet autumn variations of green walnuts, quince & carob; and winter delights of citrus fruits to drink hot during the flu season. For Feral Hamper, Mrs Kuzmanovic chose Walnut, Sage & Honey, Fennel, Lemongrass, Limoncello and Lemon flavours. Classic Istrian grappa, made in Pula and airfreighted to Brussels in son & daughter Goran & Maja Kuzmanovic's baggage.

5. Turmeric from Bangladesh

Purchased at Khagrachari farmers' market in the Buddhist Chittagong Hill Tract area (CHT) of Bangladesh, where forced resettlement and armed tribal counterinsurgency have continued on and off since the time of the British Raj. Feral Trade, in the region for an art residency, travelled 5 hours by hired van to navigate the police checkpoint which at times denies foreigners entry to the Khagrachari district. The turmeric is slope-grown locally on otherwise unfarmable land of up to 60 degrees gradient via the Government-prohibited 'jhum' method of shifting cultivation - slash and burn - practised by the local tribespeople and blamed by some national newspapers for drastic deforestation in the area - to not mention other, non-indigenous activities of teak plantation farming, hydroelectrics and jungle clearance for military camps. Jhum farming uses seed balls to co-plant up to 15 different arable crops ranging from cotton to bananas, harvested gradually over the year. Feral Trade stayed the night in Beltoli village as guest of jhum farmer Mrs Roaza, mother of artist Joydev Roaza, in a room also occupied by a wild bee hive. Turmeric transported back to UK in van, taxi, coach and Emirates.

6. Sweets (Ratluk) from Montenegro

'Domaca Radinost' to use the description of Feral Trade's Montenegrin translator Jelena Stanovnik's kayak club instructor - meaning the old Soviet word for 'home-manufactured' - in the town of Bjelo Polje, Montenegro. Bjelo

Polje is productively positioned between the port (Bar) of the world's newest country Montenegro, and road/rail links to markets in the world's newest landlocked country, Serbia. The walnut flavour Ratluk is the more expensive one as people recognise walnuts as value. The walnuts are sourced from a 50km radius; the sugar is Brazilian - the world's cheapest - imported direct through the port of Bar, thus confecting the local with the global. The original owner of the company designed the box art himself on his desktop computer to connect tradition with modernity, although the company was subsequently bought by trader Mirko Vukasinovic who runs it as part of his import-export portfolio including Bosnian coffee, light bulbs from China and Orbitz chewing gum. The sweets are trucked in their thousands to small shops and supermarkets around the region, particularly Kosovo. Mirko studied management and started a business while still a student. He wants a house along the new - illegal - river settlement in the capital Podgorica. A swimming pool, perhaps a small football stadium, host a meat festival. Further trade opportunities went cold after Feral Trade's translator turned down Mirko's offer to accompany him on a weekend in Zabljak to relax on his boat. Shipped back to UK in the Montenegro Lines, Easyjet and Ryanair baggage of Bristol residents visiting Montenegro on summer holidays: 14 successful, one box lost in transit, one squashed.

7a. Cube-Cola Concentrate and 7b. Cube-Cola Tea Towel from UK

Open-source cola, wildcrafted in Bristol UK since 2003 by Kate Rich and Kayle Brandon, a production process merging domestic and scientific methodology. One MINI (14ml) cola concentrate will yield approximately 4.5L Cube-Cola. To ensure the viability of the Cube-Cola recipe which includes essential oils from citrus, herb and floral origins it is necessary to suppress the variation inherent in organic materials. Cube-Cola sources gum Arabic for emulsification in freeze-dried form from CNI World, the world's leading producer of hydrocolloids. The caramel colouring (for colour) is from DD Williamson, world leader in caramel colouring who also supply caramel to Pepsi and Coke. Full cola recipe and mixing instructions can be found in the Cube-Cola tea towel, enclosed.

8. Cacao from Brazil

This raw cacao bean in shell hails from Bahia, a massive cacao cashpot. Plantations date back to colonial times, their lawns sport lavish white landowner houses. The cacao is little used or appreciated locally, except perhaps in condensed milk cocktails: production is entirely for the export market. Recent blight has meant the cacao produced is worth a little less - it still sells but the quality is lower. The cacao was grown on a farm called Pura Vida, named by English tourists who bought it and decided to make the farm a collective property via selling shares. Investors can visit whenever they like, although as foreigners they can't live there all the time for visa reasons. The cacao workers - usually itinerant - were asked to stay on and cultivate a garden to feed themselves, run the cacao plantation as a business. Most of the

workers are not literate and have trouble with the bookkeeping. A recent visitor to the estate, Feral Trade Agent Lottie Child, described the arrangement as straightforward compassionate colonialism. Visitors to the plantation can spend all day eating and watching donkeys work. The cacao was exported in hand baggage of two Pura Vida shareholders, Sam and Elin. A local man, Gilson, ferried them across the river in his boat to the nearby town of Ubaitaba. The cacao travelled by bus overnight to Salvador from where it is a short plane ride to San Paolo where the cheaper international flights to London Heathrow depart. The cotton bag the cacao arrived in has Bahian seed burrs gained in transit still clinging to it. Lottie Child went to St Peters newsagent in Islington, London to pick up the bag - Sam and Elin live next door - then cycled to Govinda Hare Krishna restaurant in Soho to deliver. Along with other hamper products, the cacao was transported to Brussels via wheeled suitcase, train, tube, Eurostar and FoAM company car. Recipe suggestion: grind up a handful of cacao, handful of oats with water and honey in the blender for breakfast. There is no need to remove the shell.

Feral Hamper agents, couriers, translators & hosts Abu Naser Robbi,
Jelena Stanovnik, Joydev Roaza, Kate Rich, Kayle Brandon, Lina Kusaite, Lottie Child, Maja
Kuzmanovic, Nik Gaffney, RicardoYglesias, Sam & Elin, Sneha Solanki, Mrs & Mr Solanki.

Institutional hosts & sponsors Britto Arts Trust, Cube Microplex, FoAM, gRig, Gasworks, Porapara
Space for Artists, Polytechnic, Triangle Network.

Feral Hamper Research produced at FoAM, Brussels. Kate Rich November 2008

KATE RICH *Biography*

Kate Rich is an Australian-born artist & trader. In the 1990s she moved to California to work as radio engineer with the Bureau of Inverse Technology (BIT), an international agency producing an array of critical information products including economic and ecologic indices, event-triggered webcam networks, and animal operated emergency broadcast devices. The Bureau's work has been exhibited broadly in academic, scientific and museum contexts. Restless at the turn of the century, she headed further east to take up the post of Bar Manager at the Cube Microplex, Bristol UK where she launched Feral Trade, a public experiment trading goods over social networks. Feral Trade forges new 'wild' trade routes across hybrid territories of business, art and social interaction. She is currently moving deeper into the infrastructure of cultural economy, developing protocols to define and manage amenities of hospitality, catering, sports and survival in the cultural realm.

Although the “guild for Reality integrators and generators” may have been active for centuries, since November 2006 six cultural organisations have begun to open the doors of the guild. The current gRig members share a mutual purpose; to mix separate realities, as well as bring whole new realities into existence. They are committed to research and create situations in hybrid (or mixed) reality, where digital media and physical materials, objects and spaces are increasingly intertwined. It is on these fuzzy edges that experimental technology and contemporary culture amplify each other’s potentials. We have found these edges to be the most fertile ground for innovative social and cultural advances, in which the Guild for Reality Integrators and Generators can be best called into service.

gRig sites 2006-2009

FoAM (Belgium) is a transdisciplinary laboratory committed openness, resilience and a holistic approach to life. FoAM seeks out and connects people in the interstitial spaces between professional and cultural boundaries, encouraging them to mix realities of art and science, digital and physical, nature and technology, adopting the motto - “grow your own worlds”. <http://fo.am.be>

nadine (Belgium) is an arts laboratory aimed at developing research focusing on transdisciplinary experiments in the fields of new media and live arts. *nadine* is a flexible and evolving project that doesn’t shy away from questioning itself to be able to stay on top of the constantly changing needs of artists. <http://www.nadine.be>

Time’s Up (Austria) is a research institute using experimental situations as a means of investigating the behavior of the public individual in everyday and nearly everyday situations. <http://www.timesup.org>

Performing Pictures (Sweden) works in the area of moving images and new technologies for media delivery as part of the Interactive Institute – a Swedish experimental IT-research institute that combines expertise in art, design and information technology. In their artistic practice Performing Pictures explore and develop responsive film art. <http://performingpictures.se>

KIBLA (Slovenia), a multimedia artcentre, is focused on the new (contemporary) educational, cultural and artistic praxis, connecting education and research, culture and technology, arts and sciences, emancipating and demystifying media as a creative tool in education and new forms of art. <http://kibla.si>

InterMedia (Norway) investigates the intersections between design, communication and learning in digital environments. Their approach is multidisciplinary and involves critical research, development and experiments. <http://intermedia.uio.no>



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Pura Vida, Bahia, Brazil

