

Following publication:

defetishising commodities in a humid tropics biome?





Follow the Thing: Papaya

Ian Cook et al*

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In a recent round table about *Antipode's* radical geographies, contributors argued that the journal needed more papers which stimulated debate, were accessible to academics and non-academics alike, didn't "preach to the cognoscenti", were written to fit into radical teaching agendas, and were diverse and eclectic in style (Waterstone 2002:663; Hague 2002). This paper has been written to fit this bill. It outlines the findings of multi-locale ethnographic research into the globalization of food, focusing on a supply chain stretching from UK supermarket shelves to a Jamaican farm, and concluding in a North London flat. It addresses perspectives and critiques from the growing literature on the geographies of commodities, but presents these academic arguments "between the lines" of a series of overlapping vignettes about people who were (un)knowingly connected to each other through the international trade in fresh papaya, and an entangled range of economic, political, social, cultural, agricultural and other processes also shaping these connections in the early 1990s. The research on which it is based was initially energized by David Harvey's (1990:422) call for radical geographers to "get behind the veil, the fetishism of the market", to make powerful, important, disturbing connections between Western consumers and the distant strangers whose contributions to their lives were invisible, unnoticed, and largely unappreciated. Harvey argued that radical geographers should attempt to de-fetishise commodities, re-connect consumers and producers, tell fuller stories of social reproduction, and thereby provoke moral and ethical questions for participants in this exploitation who might think they're decent people. This paper has been written to provoke such questions, to provide materials to think through and with, for geography's ongoing debates about the politics of consumption.

The Idea

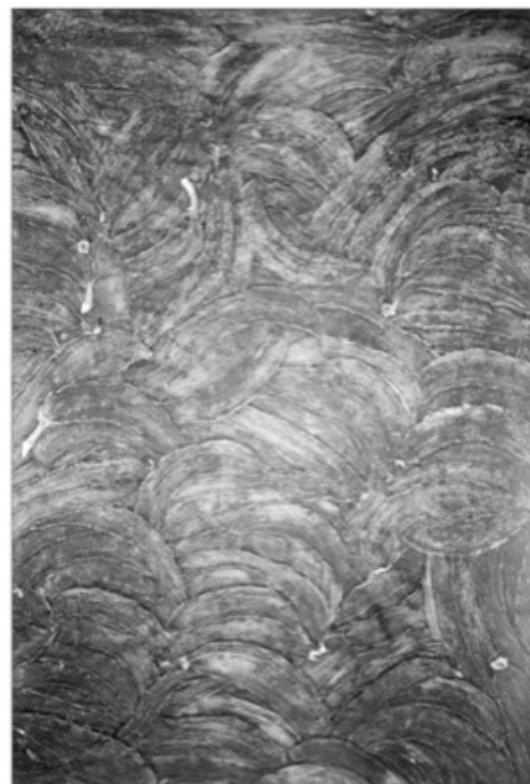
... if we accept that geographical knowledges through which commodity systems are imagined and acted upon from within are fragmentary, multiple, contradictory, inconsistent and, often, downright hypocritical, then the power of a text which deals with these knowledges comes not from smoothing them out, but through juxtaposing and montaging them ... so that audiences can work their way through them and, along the way, inject and make their own critical knowledges out of them. (Cook and Crang 1996:41)



CULTURAL GEOGRAPHIES IN PRACTICE

*Social sculpture and connective aesthetics:
Shelley Sacks's 'Exchange values'*

Ian Cook et al.

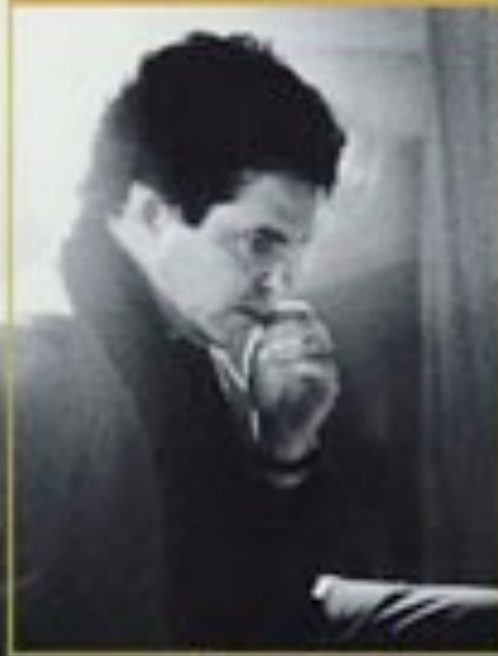


THE FILMS OF AMOS GITAI A MONTAGE

EDITÉ PAR PAUL WILLEMEN



Exils et territoires
Le cinéma
d'Amos Gitai



Serge Toubiana

avec la collaboration de Baptiste Pélage

A 'cinematic imagination geared to writing'?

Amos Gitai - the *Ananas* checklist:

- see writing as a form of architecture (creating spaces for imagination).
- don't tell your readers about your key theme or structure: let it *emerge*.
- write short coherent 'capsules' faithful to parts of your research.
- raise issues that will be returned to in similar/different ways later.
- include at least one 'jewel' from your research findings in each capsule.
- think how readers might be able to personally engage with this writing.
- think how you can include academic arguments in these narratives.
- play with your readers' possible expectations (e.g. of linear narratives).
- don't expect to be in control of what sense readers make of this.
- keep rewriting, adjusting, amending until writing *feels* right (that 'life'!)

Exchange Values: images of invisible lives.

“Free bananas in exchange for your skins”



... dried, cured and stitched into panels.

Exchange Values: images of invisible lives.

Grower numbers & names fleshed out in St Lucia

	Grower #	Names	
W/C 1	W181078	Theresa Henry - St. James Co Baptiste	
W/C 2	W190725	Ephron Manchery Northwest Donovan/Donovan	
E 3	W160129	Manseau, Estate Horace Givaudy	(Reli)
E/C 3	W320088	Hezekiah C.O.X	Intv. 2
E 4	W490347	Mitales Emmanuel	W/C 24
E 5	S060025	Harvard Joseph Sealy	North (ask Patricia help locate)
	W1321106		
S/W X	W470150	Richard Smith ? ? *	
E/C 6	W1830535	Byril Marquis *	Back
W/C 6	W190367	Belony St. Rose Joseph *	
S/W 6	W590082	Dubois Francisco	Intv. 1
E/C 7	W320637	John P. Mathurin *	
E 7	W1620231	Teachum Mathurine	Intv. 1
E/F 8	W490542	Nector Mark	Intv. ? (Reli)
N 8	W060323	Delice Jules George	(N)
E 9	W630042	Mathia Frederick	(W/C 25) 7. 1pm. MICO
E/C 10	W310047	Christopher Tahan	
E/C 11	W330085	Paul Torres	453 3859 () 450 5361 () 7:30. 64A.
W/B	W180033	WIBDECO	Patrick Mause white orchard



... “imagine & talk to consumers in this gallery space.”

Exchange Values: images of invisible lives.

G060323: panel, frame, grower number, headphones...



... & 19 others around the gallery space.

Exchange Values: images of invisible lives.

Thousands of loose skins...



... 'mute' fruit: no numbers, voices, etc.

Eden project - the humid tropics biome



Eden project - welcome signs

Eden Project

... the Living Theatre of Plants and People

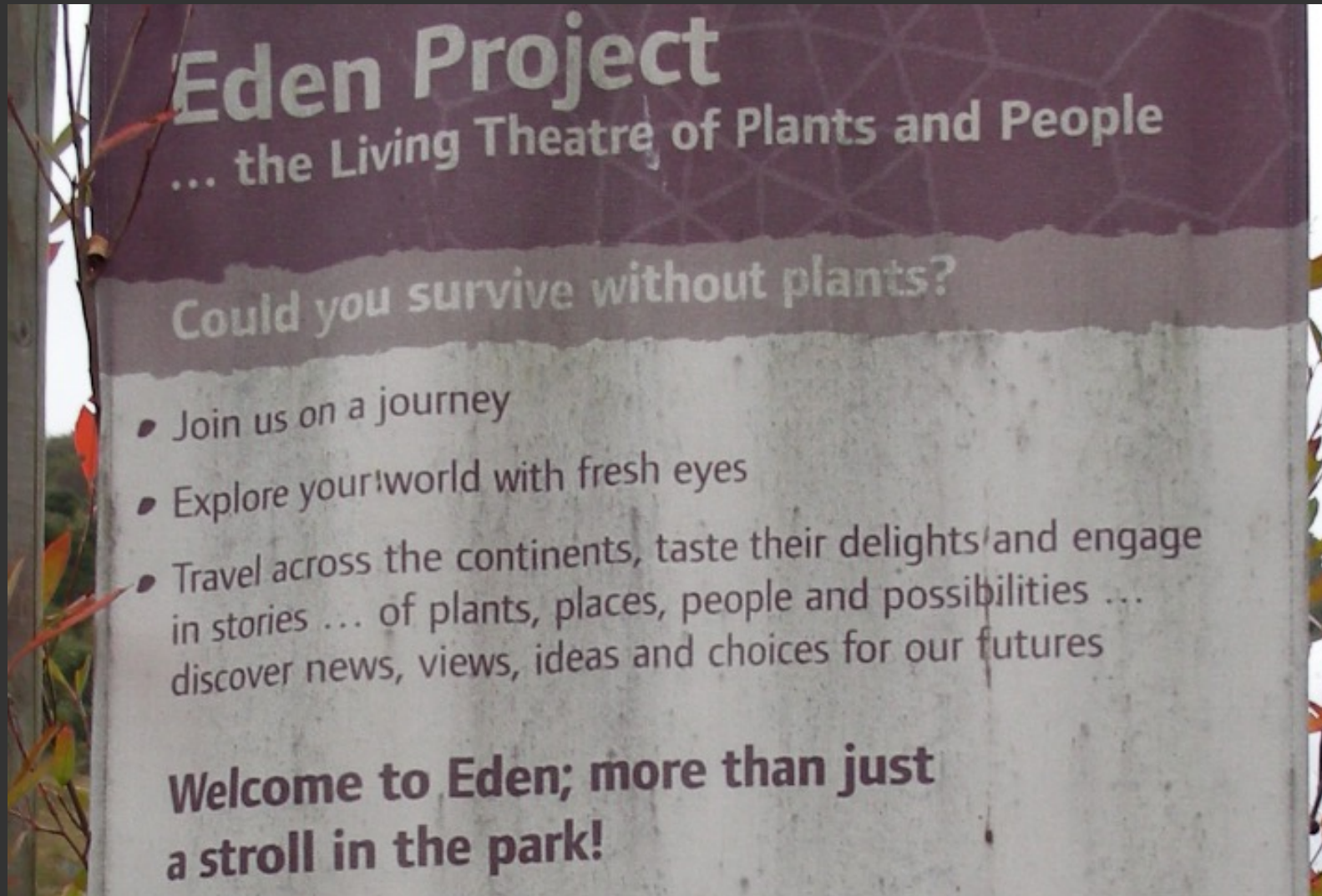
Recipe for Eden:

- 1 Take an exhausted, deep, steep-sided clay pit.
- 2 Carve into a flat-bottomed bowl and landscape the sides.
- 3 Mix and add 83,000 tonnes of soil made from recycled waste.
- 4 Add superb architecture that draws inspiration from nature.
- 5 Colonize with a huge diversity of plants, many that we use every day (but don't often get to see).
- 6 Harvest the water draining into the pit and use it to irrigate our plants (and flush the loos!).

Season with people from all walks of life working in science, art, technology, education, commerce ...

Cook for a few years to create a beautiful site to celebrate our place in nature.

Eden project - welcome signs



Eden project - welcome signs

**How many plants have you used today,
where did they come from and who grew
them for you?**

Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

The map



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

Boat bow & banana conveyor.



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

Banana packing house



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

Banana box voices of the farmers

Voices from the Windwards

"With fair trade comes the social premium helping the schools, helping along health centres, roads and feeder roads, not only for the fair trade farmer alone, but others benefit from it also."

Maria Sargent. Banana farmer.



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

The papaya table



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

The banana conveyor



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

On the conveyor - banana biographies



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

The listening post



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

Signage next to the banana bike

Don't slip up, offer support

Small producers in the Caribbean Windward Islands find it difficult to compete with the large plantations. Bananas are the only true cash crop in the region apart from pineapples.

'We need to sell our bananas so we can put food on our table and keep our kids at school.' – Grower in St. Vincent, Windward Island.

Every time you buy a banana you can make a choice. Of the mark-up on Fairtrade bananas over regular bananas, about 25p per kg goes to the grower. 'We were just about to give up, now because of Fairtrade we are holding on.' – Grower in St. Vincent, Windward Island.

Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

One papaya plant



Humid tropics biome - tropical fruit exhibit

A short walk



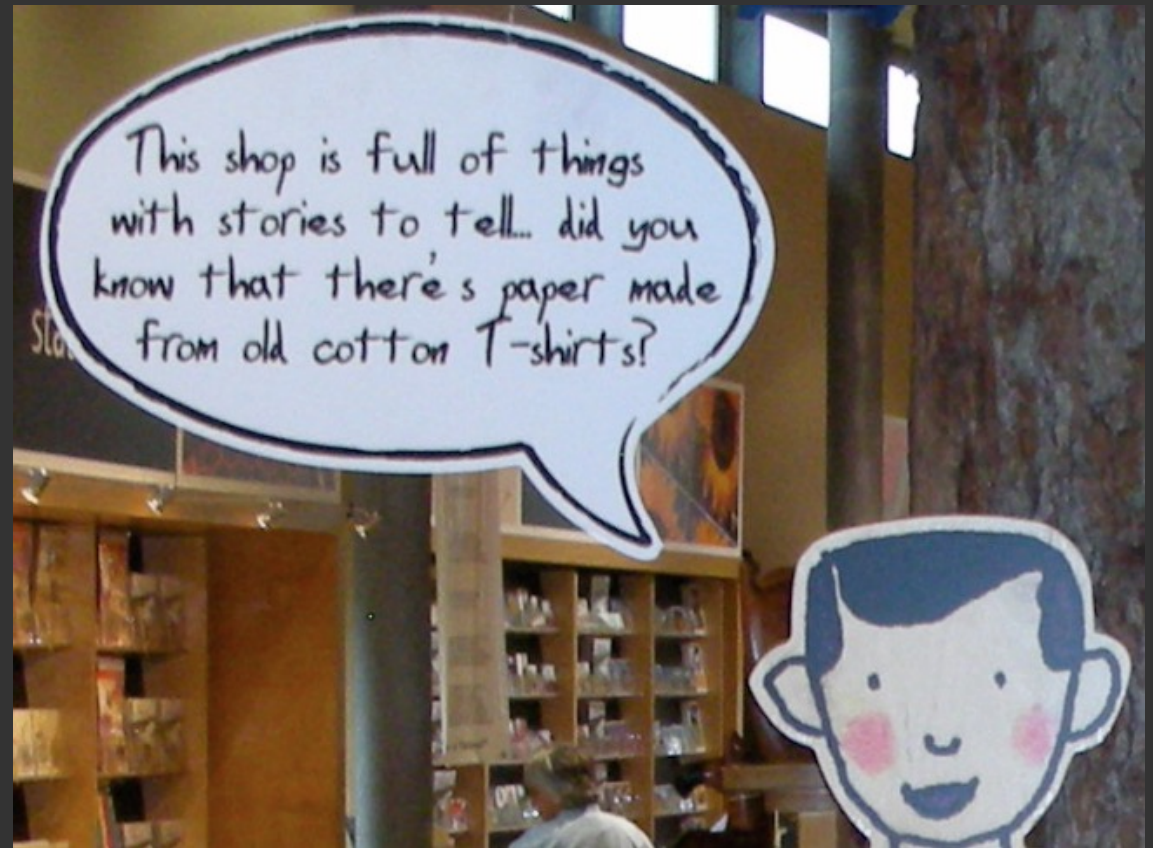
Eden Project - way out

Plant sales



Eden Project - way out

The shop



Eden Project - way out

One of many cafés

