

People, Plants, Food

Date : March 5, 2009

This year, as part of the ESRC's festival of Social Science, the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) is running a series of outreach activities in collaboration with various partners, looking at the connections between people, plants and food. The events are open to everyone. Details of the two Open Days and the screening programme are found below, as well as in the attached publicity material. The events are free but booking is required. To book a free place email: education@therai.org.uk or phone: 020 7387 0455.

Details of the events:

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF PLANTS Saturday 7th March 11:00am-4:00pm, Jodrell Laboratory, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, TW9-3AB.

This is a daytime event where anthropologists and ethnobotanists will demonstrate the (often overlooked) interconnections between the lives of plants and people. Through films, talks, hands-on learning activities and exhibitions, participants will explore how plants affect the lives of individuals around the world, in medicine, food, materials, and rituals. The event will form part of Kew's 250 anniversary, highlighting its Breathing Life Programme, as well as forming part of the International Year of Natural Fibers. Topical concerns such as conservation, climate change, biodiversity and complimentary medicine will be explored through collaborative research being undertaken by Kew and the University of Kent.

EXPLORING FOOD, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES Sunday 8th March
10:30-4:30, Clore Centre British Museum, Great Russel St. London.

This event aims to raise public awareness of local food projects within th UK and abroad, and foster future collaboration between associated groups of individuals. Presentations given by anthropologists, journalists, and organisations such as Sustain, The Soil Association, and Slow Food UK will accompany information stalls, and hands-on learning activities. A central theme of the event will be to explore how the International Slow Food Movement has inspired local food projects and the ways in which the movement's ideas of local, sustainable food production have been adapted to suit different community needs. The event aims to address questions such as: How have food projects and healthy eating/cooking campaigns helped to generate awareness and shift consumer attitudes? What are some of the difficulties faced by farmers and others involved in food production? How can we address concerns regarding accessibility and affordability? What are some of the problems with our current food production system?

UPSTAIRS@THE RAI FILM SCREENINGS: PEOPLE, PLANTS, FOOD & FILM
(9th-11th March)

Following the two outreach days on the first weekend of March, there will be a series of film screenings and discussion evenings that follow up on the subjects of people, plants and food. These screenings will take place at the screening room in the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Monday 9th March: 6:30-8:30pm

Uncle Poison (1998) Ricardo Leizaola, 60 mins; followed by a Q&A with the filmmaker

Filmed in the city of Caracas, capital of Venezuela, Uncle Poison is an intimate portrayal of a traditional faith healer, set against the backdrop of his community's Easter celebrations . Every day Benito Reyes receives people at his house looking for all sorts of cures. Through the personal testimony of the healer, this documentary looks at his role as a mediator between the social, natural and spiritual worlds.

Tuesday 10th March: 6:30-8:30pm

Betelnut Bisnis (2004) Chris Owen, 52 min,

Q&A session with Eric Hirsch (Head of Anthropology, Brunel Univ.)

Betelnut is one of the most widely used narcotics in the world. Many families living in coastal areas of Papua New Guinea, where it is grown, have come to depend on betelnut for their livelihood (trading small quantities of the nut up from the coast to sell in their local markets)

as well as feeding their addiction to the drug itself. For many, the betelnut trade is the only source of cash income to pay for basic needs such as food, school fees and medicine. This is a story of one such family -Lukas Kaima and his wife Kopu- as told by their friend and close neighbour, Chris Owen, an Australian expatriate.

Wednesday 11th March: 6:30-8:30pm

*Two student films

The Land on which we Stand (2007) Rebecca Payne, 31 min; Granada Centre of Visual Anthropology, Manchester University

This film gives us a glimpse into the life of the Landmatters Co-operative, a community of 11 adults and 4 children living in benders and yurts in rural Devon as they develop a permaculture project. Although the group own the 42 acres of land, it was originally bought for agricultural purposes and they do not have planning permission to use it for residential purposes. The film follows the group as they fight for permission to live on the land in order to create a self-reliant way of living that doesn't depend on fossil fuels.

No Such Thing as a Free Lunch (2008) Tate LeFevre, 18 min; NYU

How can a radical activist movement based on limited participation in the capitalist system use the mainstream media to further its goals? This film follows members of the Freegan movement in New York City as they dumpster dive, cook feasts with salvaged food and give interview to Oprah-all while managing their own difficult relationship with the media and each other.

FREE BUT BOOKING REQUIRED: 0207 387 0455, Nafisa Fera,

education@therai.org.uk