



The Delfina Foundation family lunch.

Founded by Delfina Entrecanales in 1988, Delfina Foundation was created as an independent non-profit to provide subsidised, high-quality studio space and resources for artists. With its rich history and international acclaim, the foundation has nurtured and supported hundreds of artists, including 13 Turner Prize nominees. Every few weeks the foundation opens its doors to outsiders – gallerists, curators, journalists – to meet with its in-residence artists and eat a “family lunch” together, hosted by its founding director, Aaron Cezar.

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Aaron Cezar “Family lunch” is really an informal articulation of what we try to do here at Delfina Foundation: to find artistic approaches with which to rethink the world around us. During the lunch I’ll ask each of the artists in residence to talk about their work as it relates to the theme we’re currently exploring, which is the politics of food. The artists very much live and work in this space, we think of this entire house as a studio. So Delfina Foundation is very much a home, and like in any home, everything that happens outside the domestic space affects what happens inside. In the last three weeks we’ve seen some seismic shifts take place, not only in Britain with the renegotiation of its role and position within Europe, but also with the multiple acts of terrorism around the world, from Istanbul to Dhaka, from Medina to Orlando. We had a family lunch the day after the referendum, it was an incredibly sad and depressing lunch, although the format of lunch reaffirmed why we do it. So today I thought we should talk about the idea of utopia or utopianism in relation to our current programme, the Politics of Food. Partly because it has been the subject of research for one of our UK associate artists, Jane Levi.

Jane Levi I’m mainly a historian, but like anyone who works with food I dabble in other disciplines. I have a particular interest in the people who have tried to create ideas of utopia – or at least a different way of living – using food. I use food as a lens through which to examine what such people were trying to do and the thinking behind it. So I tend to focus on people who have explicitly used food as one of their forms of expression and how they communicated what it was that they were trying to achieve to the rest of the world – like some of the countercultural groups in the 1960s and 1970s in San Francisco; or the 20th-century Diggers who fed the poor and held the principle that food should always be free. For the latter group, it was a performative act of giving and expressing freedom, so food is a good way of declaring your political stance on a lot of things. I’m also very interested in historical precedents to those kinds of ideas, and the way that the urge to find a better way of life is continually expressed throughout history in different ways of thinking about agriculture, thinking about how we share food or not, how we eat together or not.



Jane Levi.

AC I want to connect those ideas to the work of Thomas Pausz, one of our international residents, who is seated at the end of the table. Thomas has been exploring a different context of agriculture within the framework of the city, and in particular thinking about urban farms and allotments.

Thomas Pausz Yes, I work with allotments and the connection that they have with utopianism is maybe more in its perception. But allotments raise questions like: Is food growing viable? Is it a necessity or a lifestyle choice? In relation to Brexit, I read an article that explained how the food security of Britain is seriously in danger because of the possible changes in trade and movement between different countries. Food growing is going to become more important in future. At a global level, we need to stop shipping food around. I live in Iceland where everything is imported, and from this experience of living in a place of scarcity I began looking at allotments.

AC I want you to talk about your work with dandelions because it's a very specific example of looking at the whole notion of sustainability and how we can think about food systems.

TP I'm going to work with the dandelion as a resource because I want to try to exhaust all the possible materials and possible things you can make from one species. I want to make edible things, syrups, raw materials, pulps, and hopefully even rubber. There are two ideas at play here: one is in terms of our loss of biodiversity, so with the dandelions I think it will be interesting to find diversity with one single resource, and two, is related to our "plant blindness". There are many plants that we don't even look at, that we don't know how to use.

AC There's a thread in your work that runs towards another of our artists and so I want to turn to Kathrin, who is an artist based here in London – she provided some of the drinks that are on the table. I want to know more about the idea of communal hop picking and agriculture that led to the creation of these drinks.

Kathrin Böhm I'm working on an art project that takes the shape of a community drinks enterprise. One of the first drinks we made this year is an elderflower soda and it's picked by communities in Barking and Dagenham, which are traditionally working class. The enterprise is called Company, so in relation to utopia, our logo is a simple "c" which is related to ideas of collectives, community, co-operatives and congestion charges! When you talk to old hop pickers, they will point out that the picking was about making some money, but it was mainly about being in good company. There is a collective spirit that comes out of this 100-year-long tradition, and that's what I'm really interested in. The project is also about community economies, about exercising this idea that an economy involves many aspects of doing, sharing, contributing, paying.

AC Now, Daniel and Alon of Cooking Sections have been part of our Politics of Food programme since the beginning. And a major project they've been working on this summer looks at food products coming from the British Empire.

Alon Schwabe About three years ago as part of the Politics of Food programme, we started a research project based on a collection of historical posters that were created by a governmental initiative called the Empire Marketing Board. The board existed for eight years between 1926 and 1934 and its whole purpose was to encourage the citizens of the British Empire, especially the UK, to consume foodstuffs from all over the colonies and dominions. The aim was to both reinforce the economy, but also to put responsibility for the success of the British economy on the citizens of the Empire rather than on the King or ruler.

Daniel Fernández Pascual The way they would do this was through these beautiful posters. The posters were propaganda that created desires, wishes, dreams and so on. Many of these posters can be seen at the Victoria & Albert museum today. So we are trying to think about the contemporary legacy of all of this.

AS We have been doing a lot of research into the imaginary landscapes that were depicted in the posters and really investigating these spaces and what remains of them. In one series of posters we found a proposal for Empire shops, which would have opened all across London and in major British cities, where people could go to buy products that came uniquely from the British

colonies. These Empire Shops never actually opened. But this summer on 4 August, we are opening the Empire Remains Shop at 91-93 Baker Street. Here we will speculate about the remains of the British Empire in contemporary London. It will be a three-month installation with a window display that changes every ten days. There are going to be events, performances, dinners, plays, lectures, symposia.

AC I want to return to Laura to speak about one of the projects she's initiating here, which has again the potential to develop a new product for the English market.

Laura Wilson I'm originally from Belfast in Northern Ireland and my work involves working with traditions, but also looking at how information is passed on from one person to another. In the past my work has involved brickmaking, but most recently I've been working with a baker and a dancer in Sheffield to look at the choreography of bread making. This summer I'm starting a project called "Trained on Veda", an exploration of a particular bread called Veda bread now only available in Northern Ireland. At the beginning of the last century it was popular in the UK, but for various reasons the processes of making and distributing it fell into decline. So now it's only produced in Northern Ireland, but I've made contact with the person who is the keeper of the secret recipe and the Veda Bread archive. I've been in discussions with him about how we're going to produce Veda bread for the first time outside Northern Ireland in over half a century. We think this is the right moment for all of this to come to fruition. Together we will work with a baker who is based just outside London and runs a family bakery which has operated in that area for 175 years.



Delfina Foundation comprises two Edwardian houses joined down the centre by a dining room and kitchen. For this lunch, the “family” ate Brazilian pastéis de bacalhau (cod croquettes) and bacalhau à brás (scrambled salt cod, eggs and potatoes).

Veda bread is a small, malted, caramel-coloured loaf sold in Northern Ireland that, when fresh, has a very soft consistency. Above, Laura Wilson.

AC The topic of markets and movements runs through the politics of food, especially for Chris Fite-Wassilak. Chris is a writer, a critic, a sometimes curator and a cheesemonger. Chris, can you explain the context of your practice in relation to both markets and utopianism?

Chris Fite-Wassilak Cheese, for me has become a very big lens through which to discover other things. I work as a writer, thinking about cultural history, but I’ve also been working as a cheesemonger since 2003. I grew up in suburban Atlanta eating things like Velveeta cheese, but over the past ten years I have been learning a lot more about farmhouse production of unpasteurised cheeses. It’s these dichotomies that interest me as well as the idea of how we can develop and find mini-utopias away from central economies. I’m spending the next few months working on this in a long-form piece, firstly about the politics of production, but also about the intimacies of consumption. I’ll be looking at two specific cheeses: one is a goat’s cheese made by an anarchist in the Limousin region of France – he was a *soixante-huitard* and he squatted in a forest before starting a commune between farmers so as to be able to survive within the market. All the farmers produce one cheese together that they can then distribute nationally. The second cheese is called Provel, which was first produced in 1947, and is from St. Louis, Missouri. It’s a typical, gooey, processed cheese: a mixture of Cheddar, Swiss cheese and provolone. St. Louisans are very proud of it. My grandma was obsessed with Provel and I could never understand why, but it’s one of these things where you have all these ritualistic meals in which it features very strongly. I’m thinking about the trace of this cheese and about foods that may not have a good provenance, but still have a strong connection for people. §

*The Empire Remains Shop* by Cooking Sections, 91-93 Baker Street, London, runs until 6 November 2016.

*The Politics of Food* residency programme at Delfina Foundation runs until 18 September 2016.