ART&FOOD

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Art meets food, guest edited by Cedar Lewisohn

GOOD COMPANY, BAD COLA

Based in Barking, Company: Movement, Deals and Drinks was set up by international art collective MyVillages in 2014 as a community enterprise linking east London's history of hop picking with a full drinks production cycle, from bottling and branding to trading and reinvesting. Since then, they've taken part in exhibitions and art fairs while remaining rooted in community and educational events. We caught up with Company's Kathrin Böhm to discover more.

How would you describe Company?
Company Drinks is a work of art in the shape of a community drinks enterprise. It connects east London's history of families going 'hop-picking" in Kent with the setup of a public drinks production cycle. Company Drinks is as ambitious as the reasons people had for going picking originally, or as one former hop picker put it: "It wasn't just about the money, it was about being in good company."

Who are the main people involved in the project and why did you start it?
Company Drinks is based in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and it's local residents and organisations that get involved. Some are regulars, others come for one-off activities. Some are students and it's part of their training, others are former hop-pickers who love to reminisce. The age of people getting involved ranges from four to 88 years.

Is this about food or art, or does that not matter?
It's both, and this matters.

What can you tell me about BAD Cola? How is it made, and how did it come about?
It was a way to get young people involved in thinking about drinks, production, branding and profits. We work with Kate Rich from Cube Cola, who has DIY'ed the whole process of making a cola concentrate based on the original Coke recipe. We offer drop-in workshops in local libraries during the holidays, and kids mix their own cola. And they did the naming and branding as well. BAD as in Barking and Dagenham. BAD as in good. BAD as in cola can never really be good for you...

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