

International Village Shop

A cultural platform for the development and exchange of local produce across a network of rural and urban spaces.

SO FAR

The *International Village Shop* is a joint non-for profit initiative by myvillages.org (UK, NL, Ger), public works (UK), Grizedale Arts (UK) and Somewhere (UK) and has been developing as a concept since 2007. * The *International Village Shop* is a cultural project, which takes contemporary conceptual art as a context and explores trade as a methodology to exchange and network cultural knowledge, goods, producers and users. The trade is not driven by commercial interests but by a shared interest in contemporary cultural production and value systems. The project exists across an international network of local producers and collaborators, temporary and semi-permanent trading platforms and trans-local cultural exchange.

The *International Village Shop* offers a public platform and facility to exchange produce, skills and associated narratives across rural places and networks. To establish and extend a pan-national and inter-rural network of cultural practitioners. To develop a new typology for a cultural space with multiple authors and collaborators across various countries.

The shop has been chosen as a familiar everyday format for the various collaborators and audiences involved in the different layers of the project. A shop requires production, distribution, communication and trade, which take place across private, communal and public spaces.

The *International Village Shop* doesn't exist as a single shop, but as a dispersed network of temporary and permanent production and trading places. Shops stock "traveling" produce from across the network and local seasonal produce from the place they are in. The "traveling" produce are outcomes from collaborations/cooperations between the *International Village Shop* partners and local producers and interest groups. They originate from cultural, political or social interests at and in a place, and embody particular local narratives, skills and desires. The products for the shop come from a wide range of sources and contributors, such as professionals and amateurs and work with local knowledge and imported knowledge. The performative aspect of the products as well as – and even more important - the performative work of producers and shopowners are producing translocal and new local perceptions. The shop trades the products across cultural and language borders. "Village Produce Films" are made in conjunction with new produce. These short documentaries communicate the particularities of each product and its production. The films are 4 – 6 minutes long and focus on „handling“ as a form of explaining. Each film starts with a brief visual introduction to the geographical place. It then follows the producers and their everyday routines and activities that inform the products. The collection of films shows the multiple places and individuals involved in the overall project. The different scales on the *International Village Shop*, from international links, to the individual village, to private production sites are captured in the films. They are shown during shop settings, and explain the extended network of producers and production sites that make the *International Village Shop*.

The four partners involved have been generating produce and setting up trade in a variety of places independently since 2004. The joint *International Village Shop* initiative brings together similar interests and forms of cultural production and dissemination by the four groups involved.

Settings of the *International Village Shop* so far include:

- One day shops in conjunction with the launch of new village produce, such as the one-day *International Village Shop* in the village of Boxberg (Ger) to present new Boxberg (Ger) products (<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=38>) or in Loughborough (UK) to present the new "a ball is a ball is a ball" product which results from a collaboration between a group of teenagers from the village of Barrow upon Soar and staff from the University's Sports Technology Institute (<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=37>).
- Temporary shops as part of curated programmes such as the "Village Kiosk" at the National Architecture Institute (NAi) in Rotterdam as part of "Happening" (<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=27>), or in conjunction with the launch of "Toadball.tv" at the Royal Academy in London

(<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=29>), and the “Honesty Table” as part of the Northern Art Prize exhibition at Leeds City Art Gallery (<http://www.somewhere.org.uk/samurai/honesty/>).

- Permanent Honesty Shops such as the Honesty Box at Lawson Park Farm set up by Grizedale Arts in 2006, and stocked with artefacts and publications from arts projects (such as Peter’s Pots, Grizedale books, etc.) and seasonal produce from Lawson Park Gardens (such as cabbage, pickles, potatoes, etc.)

<http://www.grizedale.org/projects/honesty.stall>

In 2009 the Honesty Box has been extended into an Honesty Stall by Wapke Feenstra/myvillages.org for the reopening of Lawson Park Farm.

A permanent Honesty Box for the Japanese village of Toge as part of Grizedale Art’s residency and produced “Seven Samurai”. Stocking repackaged and newly labeled homegrown rice and sandals made from old Kimonos (in collaboration with Somewhere), music cd’s with songs from the village recorded and produced by Juneau Projects, etc.

<http://www.grizedale.org/projects/seven.samurai>.

- An annual stall during the village fete in the southern german village of Höfen, which features “Höfer Goods”, a series of new products developed by the women of the village in collaboration with a product designer. Outcomes include a Butter-stamp-spoon, a Jar Lamp and Doylee Bags.

<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=2>

- One hour shops in conjunction with presentations and public events such as at the California College of the Arts, San Francisco (<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=30>) and Ars Foyer during Ars Electronica Festival 2008.

- A permanent corner shop shelf in the waiting room in a veterinary’s clinic in rural Friesland (NL).

NEXT

Several aspects of the *International Village Shop* are currently being developed by the group:

- An *International Village Shop* website to bring together the work and existence of the project as a multi-authored, cross-cultural, spatially dispersed and trans-local enterprise.

- A web based adaptation of the Honesty Box principle, in form of a six months long *Online Honesty Stall* to be hosted on the *International Village Shop* website. The *Online Honesty Stall* is an experiment in cultural trade online to explore informal online-specific forms of trade and exchange and a bespoke online trading platform.

The prototype online stall will run as a six month-duration online village shop, maintained and staffed by the four IVS organisations.

Besides offering produce from the existing IVS, each partner will develop and produce new items for the *Online Honesty Stall*. New produce can be developed as physical and/or digital items.

- The development and production of new village shop produce.

Confirmed collaborations and production workshops include “Schnucken, Elefanten* und andere Gastgeschenke” for the village of Neuenkirchen in rural northern Germany (<http://www.myvillages.org/index.php?a=work&id=39>), and two ad hoc production workshops in the UK and Ger as part of “Rhyzom” a collective pan-european research and dissemination project (<http://www.rhiz.eu/artefact-29987-en.html>).

- The implementation of a new network of Honesty Stalls for the Coniston Lake area, accompanied by cross-cultural product development and in collaboration with local farmers and producers.

- A printed publication to address and illustrate economical aspects of the *International Village Shop*, such as monetary activities, in kind support, barter trade, informal local economies, trading routes, etc.

Funders for the various stands and activities of the *International Village Shop* so far include:

- EU Cultural Funding
- Mondriaan Stichting
- Grizedale Arts/A Foundation
- FondsBKVB

- NAI
- Stiftung Springhornhof
- Ueber Tage
- RADAR arts programme, Loughborough University
- myvillages.org with village food from Wjelsryp, Höfen and Heiligendorf

Description of the partners involved:

myvillages.org is a pan-european artist initiative founded in 2003 by Kathrin Böhm (UK/Ger), Wapke Feenstra (NL) and Antje Schiffers (Ger).

www.myvillages.org

public works is a London based art and architecture practice with its current members architects Andreas Lang and Torange Khonsari and artists Kathrin Böhm and Polly Brannen. Public works has been collaborating in different constellations since 1999.

www.publicworksgroup.net

Grizedale Arts is a Cumbria based Arts Organisation with Lawson Park Farm as its base. Grizedale Arts is curating and producing cross-cultural projects both within its local context and across an international network of collaborators.

www.grizedale.org

Somewhere is a multi-disciplinary creative company run by artists Nina Pope and Karen Guthrie since 1997, who produce ambitious, innovative and challenging projects spanning film, the web, installation, live events and broadcast media.

www.somewhere.org.uk