

## New exhibition redefines the relationship between contemporary art and the rural ahead of major conference in June

### Myvillages

#### Setting the Table: Village Politics

7 May 2019 – 18 August 2019

Galleries 5 & 6, Free Entry

#villagepolitics

- **New exhibition opening today spans 16 years of collaborative rural artistic production**
- **Major conference on contemporary art and the rural takes place 20 – 22 June, *The Rural Assembly***
- **The publication *Documents of Contemporary Art: The Rural* out now, edited by Kathrin Böhm and Wapke Feenstra from Myvillages**

7th May 2019 – Whitechapel Gallery morphs Galleries 5 and 6 into a giant cabinet in this exhibition spanning 16 years of artistic thinking and production in over 30 locations, all based outside of urban settings. From Ballykinlar, Ireland, to Ekumfi-Ekawfo, Ghana, international artist collective **Myvillages** explore the rural as a space for radical cultural practice in *Setting the Tables: Village Politics*. Presenting a complex vision of the countryside that is distinctively experimental and artistically vital, the exhibition is part of Whitechapel Gallery's ongoing collaborative programme dedicated to exploring the making of art outside of so-called cultural centres, culminating in June 2019 with a major conference.

Bringing together multiple global projects, the display simulates a showroom. More than 50 objects, vessels and artefacts are piled high, each representing a unique rural industry, economy or community. Works include 56 metres of Höfer Lace, imbued with the history of European lace-making industries, ceramics made in remote Russian village Zvizzchi using a special, high-quality local clay, and an enormous word search puzzle featuring the names of over 100 locations with which Myvillages has worked. 13 monitors show films in 6 different languages, exploring the relationships between object, context and artist, as well as the richness of cultural landscapes outside the metropolis. The exhibition demands we reframe our thinking about the relationship between the rural and contemporary art.

A collaborative practice dedicated to working exclusively in rural places with existing village communities, Myvillages was established in 2003 by artists **Kathrin Böhm** (b. 1969), **Wapke Feenstra** (b.1959) and **Antje Schiffrs** (b. 1967). Myvillages aims to bring a new dynamism to solidified notions of local resources and production, agriculture and culture.

Whitechapel Gallery hosts a major conference which invites an international and cross-disciplinary conversation on contemporary art and the rural on 20 - 22 June 2019, titled *The Rural Assembly*, together with **Wysing Arts Centre**. Delivering a keynote address is **Wu Mali** (b. 1957), a Taiwanese conceptual artist and pioneer of socially engaged work which has consistently engaged rural communities. The conference also features a participatory walk with artist **Ian Giles**, Open Ramble East (b. 1985) and a performance by **Jade Monserrat**, alongside participants from around the world.

*Setting the Table* is the final instalment of a programme of public events and research at Whitechapel Gallery, *The Rural: Contemporary Art and Spaces of Connection*. *The Rural* was prompted by two key ideas; firstly, to consider the

### Press Release

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impact of the current political moment on art and cultural institutions, and secondly, the desire to look at art practices and artists working outside of urban centres, erroneously assumed to be less rich in artistic capital. It has included partnerships with **Istanbul Biennial, University of Aberystwyth, Manchester School of Art** and **Wysing Arts Centre**. Alongside this, anthology *Documents of Contemporary Art: The Rural*, edited by Myvillages, was published earlier this year, featuring a collection of texts, interviews and documentation reflecting the complex interrelationship between the urban, the rural and contemporary cultural production.

#### Notes to Editors

- The project is curated by Jane Scarth, Curator: Public Programmes and Sofia Victorino, Director of Education and Public Programmes at Whitechapel Gallery.
- *Documents of Contemporary Art: The Rural* is edited by Myvillages, and co-published by Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press.

#### About Whitechapel Gallery

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London's cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world's most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

#### Visitor Information

Admission: Free

Opening times: Tuesday, Wednesday and Sunday, 11am – 6pm; Thursdays and Fridays, 11am – 9pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Nearest London Underground Stations: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR

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