

TRANSPORTED POP UP SHOPS

HANDBOOK



TRANSPORTED

INTRODUCTION

You might think that the High Street is in trouble. Shops have closed, sites bought for regeneration sit empty while recession-shy developers wait for the right time, the people that opened shops in the boom of the 1960s-70s are retiring and people are spending more time at out-of-town retail parks or shopping online.

But these empty spaces in town centres are still useful. Artists and creative organisations love them because they're perfect places for temporary, pop up projects. And these may show what tomorrow's High Street will look like.

Artists have exhibited, museums created temporary local history collections, podcasters recorded oral history before it's lost forever. People have created meeting spaces, workshops, studios, ateliers, community centres and places for play. This guide has been produced to share the findings of Transported, a strategic, community-focused programme which aims to get more people in Boston Borough and South Holland enjoying and participating in arts activities. Managed by a consortium from artsNK, Lincs Artist Forum, Lincolnshire CVS and funded by the Creative People and Places fund from Arts Council England, it used two empty shops to create pop up spaces in August 2013.

As Transported proved, the public want to come back into these previously private, commercial spaces in town centres and make them their own again.

So when you hear the High Street is dead – think again. It's changing, shifting, becoming more creative – but as projects like Transported are proving, it's full of life.

Dan Thompson, Revolutionary Arts
Author of *Pop Up Business For Dummies*

Writing a Plan

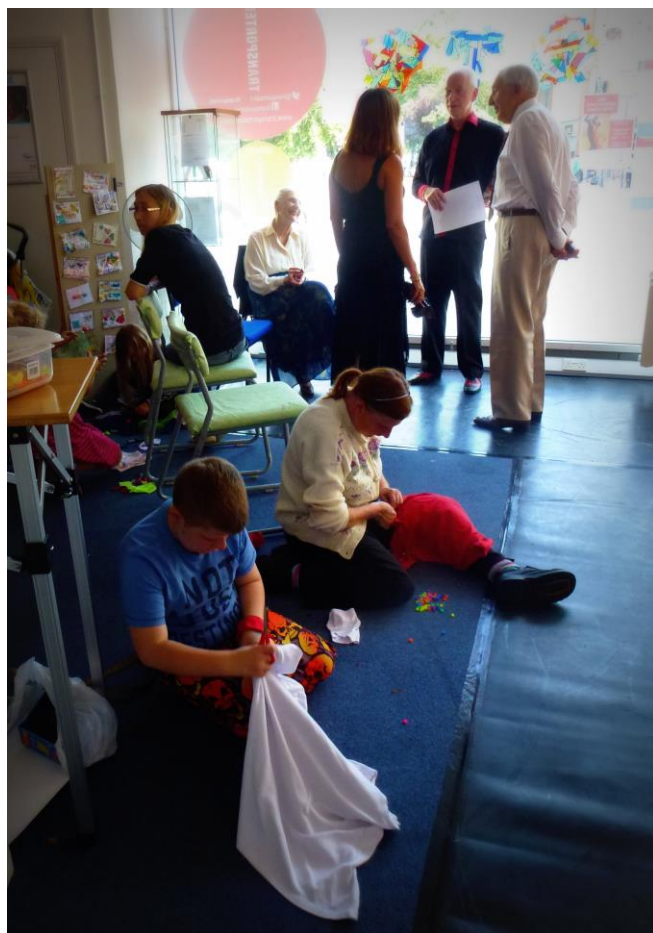
Planning a project helps you to understand why you're doing the project and the benefits it will bring to other people.

You'll need to keep your plan flexible, so it fits when different spaces become available. Here at Transported, we started with a clear plan but had to adapt to moving dates and to different shop spaces.

Always be realistic about what you can do with the resources you have, and include options for different levels of resources and budget.

The need to be nimble is particularly true with empty shops, where things can change quickly; you need to plan ahead *and* be good at responding quickly to the unexpected.

So be ready to adapt to the space, embrace the temporary nature of the project and cope with a little bit of creative chaos if it comes.



Managing Risk

Managing the risks and the health & safety requirements of a project is about applying common sense and being careful without being overly cautious.

Break the risks down into three areas, and use these checklists for your own risk assessment:

Fire Safety

- Phone available to make emergency calls
- Rubbish cleared away, other materials & resources safely stored
- Fire exits marked, routes to fire exits clear of obstructions
- Any alarms and equipment tested
- An evacuation plan in place, and all staff & volunteers informed

Health & Safety

- Phone available to make emergency calls
- Public areas clean, tidy & free of hazards, for example trip hazards or stacked boxes
- Areas not to be used by public closed and clearly marked
- Electrics and any portable electrical items safe, visually checked for damage or broken cables
- Any specialist equipment only used by responsible staff & volunteers

Security

- Phone available to make emergency calls
- Windows shut & locked when premises not in use
- Doors locked & secured when premises not in use
- A safe, locked area available for private possessions like bags and coats

Planning a Budget

Initial costs

- materials to do the shop up – paint and polyfilla, brushes, sandpaper
- furniture, fixtures and fittings
- electrical items – a kettle, vacuum cleaner, portable heaters
- printed publicity – leaflets, posters, business cards
- signs, window vinyls and graphics, and an A-board
- a website domain, building a website
- media advertising, leaflet distribution

Ongoing costs

- business rates
- utility bills; usually only electricity and water
- insurance cover
- tea, coffee and biscuits for staff
- toilet paper and soap
- window cleaner and cloths
- mobile phone calls
- pay-as-you-go broadband, whether it's a dongle or a Wi-Fi router
- website hosting
- media advertising, leaflet distribution

Utility supplies

In most shops water and electricity are still connected. If they are, ask the landlord or their agent to keep a reading and charge you for what you use. If they're not connected, you may have to factor in reconnection costs and be aware - there may be a minimum time for the contract to run, so you may have to keep paying after you've left. For our Transported pop up shops, found it's easier to use mobile phones and mobile broadband than to have these connected.

Insurance cover

Most major insurers offer packages tailored to the needs of small businesses and shops, which are very affordable and can be set up with a phone call or online. These will cover your property against the public having an accident, break in or damage to windows and doors and so on.

Artists should have their own insurance, to cover them for Public Liability but also their artwork, and any tools they use – like laptops or cameras.

Staffing

Staffing a pop up shop is your biggest expense – starting with planning meetings, get-togethers and workshops, and then moving into running the project, opening the shop and writing up evaluation afterwards. Keep a record for all the staff involved. Even if you're planning to work on a voluntary basis – do start keeping a timesheet. It's useful information to know, and will help another project to follow your model in the future.

Our Transported pop up shops were open for 100 hours each, with around 50 hours for meetings, planning, programming and fitting out the shops in advance of that.

Finding a Location for your Pop Up Shop

Finding a location for your pop up shop can be tricky, but it's not too hard to get into an empty shop, especially if you lay good foundations. But start early as it can take a long time – and don't get hung up on one unit, keep your options open and talk to as many people as possible.

To find our Transported pop up shop spaces, we spoke to:

- Letting agents
- Local shops
- Shopping centre managers
- Local council

Prepare a short introduction for these people, so you can explain in less than a minute why they should help you use an empty shop. Think about the benefits to them, not about yourself!



Planning the Space

Curating & Merchandising

High street retailers spend a lot of time, money and effort making their shops look good – you can achieve similar standards on a budget by being creative and thinking sideways.

Think carefully about how your space will work.

For Transported in Boston we had a big, open space with large windows which we found could be intimidating for visitors, particularly because when running workshops they felt they were being watched. So we used screens and furniture to create multiple spaces – a quiet corner for meetings, a workshop area, and a space at the front for displaying art.

That could look a jumble, but the basic rule is, choose a style and stick to it. Find furniture and objects that match, and treat the space as one big display. Or if you're going to 'zone' the interior – maybe a café area, a shop corner, a display space – use furniture and colours to make each area distinct.

Signs & Legibility

Signs are important. Look at the shops around yours – they have invested in clear signs, corporate identities and clever displays to make it comfortable for customers to come in and spend money.

It's worth spending money on shop signs or vinyl transfers for your shop windows. We applied our branding to the windows and it really got people interested in what we were doing.

If you don't have the budget for that, be creative, and remember that a huge, homemade sign outside the venue may be more effective than an A4 poster in a window.



Marketing

Marketing On A Budget

Get a big sheet of paper, draw up a calendar starting at least a month in advance of your project, and plot in your marketing activity week-by-week. Start your marketing as early as possible, particularly if you're working in an off the high street location where it will be harder to attract visitors. In these locations, like our Transported pop up shop in Holbeach which was off the main shopping street, good marketing really counts.

There should be three strands to your marketing; print, media and online.

Checklist

- Flyers
- Posters (adapted from flyers)
- Press Release
- Press email list
- Facebook group
- Twitter account

Social Networking

Social media is really good for empty shops projects, where you need to be fast and flexible. The very least you need is a Twitter account and a Facebook page:

<https://twitter.com/transportedart>

<https://www.facebook.com/transportedart>

But there are many more, like photo-sharing website Flickr, and business site LinkedIn, which may be useful.

All of these let you build your own page to talk about what you do: and let people become your friends or followers to receive updates about what you're doing. They're usually free to use so they have a large number of users, putting you in touch with a large audience.

Don't wait until you have a shop secured and the project has started – get going as early as possible, so that you've built a buzz and excitement before you've even opened. Collect together friends, an audience, volunteers and potential ambassadors for your project.



When You're Open

Once you're through the door, check the shop has everything you need.

- Doors lock, keys
- Windows safe
- Toilet accessible and working
- Running water, sink or kitchen area
- Lights working and visually appear safe
- Telephone and broadband
- Heating working, controls explained

Now start bringing in your furniture, get those vinyls up on the windows and you're off.

Opening times

It's better to advertise you are open for less hours, and get the highest number of visitors in the shortest time – we opened the Transported pop up shops from Wednesday to Saturday. Use the social media you've signed up with to let people know when you're open. Make this a regular reminder, as you'll catch different people online on different days.

Make your shop stand out

On the days you're open, use signs on street corners to direct people your way. Find out if there are any sites nearby where you can legally hang a temporary banner or signpost. And if you can display an A-board, put one out in a prominent location.

Make your venue stand out from other in the street: bunting, flags, or balloons tell people exactly where you are and are like an urban shorthand that says something exciting is happening. We put flags and deckchairs with the Transported logo on them outside our pop up shops!

Handling visitors

You'll notice that many people are worried about entering your shop, especially if it's not immediately clear what you're doing: make them feel comfortable by putting up a sign to say you are open, and if possible leaving the front door open wide.

Once visitors are in, try to make them feel welcome without being too pushy. Acknowledge them and remember to smile!



Encourage visitors to interact using social media as well – display your Twitter handle and a hashtag if you're using one.

Use a visitor's book as well, near the door, to capture comments from visitors as they're leaving. Or be inspired – a big board, sticky notes and a pen are an equally good, and far more visually exciting, way to encourage feedback.

And make sure that visitors can take away your details too, by giving them postcards, business cards, badges or a simple leaflet. Include all the ways they can contact you – with your Facebook address, Twitter name, email and phone number shown clearly.

Finally, try to get good-quality photos of your visitors at busy times that you can upload to Facebook and Flickr. And put a sign up asking them to upload their images to your Facebook page and Flickr group as well.

Useful Equipment

Here's some of the stuff we found useful in our Transported pop up shops.

Tables: Folding pasting tables are ideal, as unlike larger commercial trestle tables they will fold in half and fit into the boot of a normal car. Don't buy cheap wooden ones – they'll fall apart far too quickly. Professional painters and decorators use high-quality, metal framed pasting tables and the most stylish ones look really good as well as being firm and sturdy to work on. They should cost around £35-£50 each.

Seats: Pasting tables can be higher than normal tables, so look at bar stools for use when working at them. There are plenty of folding or stacking seats available as well, and it's worth having enough to accommodate guests.

Wi-Fi: We used Wi-Fi dongles, laptops and phones. There's also a gadget called a 'mi-fi' which is about the size of a mobile phone. It connects to mobile broadband, and then acts as a Wi-Fi router for up to five laptops or other devices. Whatever you use, share the password so all your artists can log on!

Tablecloths and bunting: Using fabric softens a space, gets rid of nasty echoes and hides clutter. Single bed sheets are about the right size for covering trestle or pasting tables. Buy a load in one colour so your space looks coordinated. Bunting's always good!

Toolkit: You'll need a few tools, and our lead artist Carol Parker was like Mary Poppins when she opened her toolkit. You don't need anything specialist, just a claw hammer, pliers, scissors, a couple of screwdrivers and a staple gun. Add gaffer tape, masking tape, nylon fishing wire, small tacks or nails, drawing pins and staples and you're ready. Blu-tack, bulldog clips and dressmaking pins are also useful for displaying things. The whole kit will cost less than £50.



Packing Up

When you've finished, you need to make sure you'll be invited back by the landlord or letting agent.

First clear everything you've brought into the shop. You can remove window vinyls with a sharp, flat blade – soften them first with a hairdryer and they'll peel off easily.

Spend some time with a tube of fast-drying filler, and fill any holes you've made in the walls. Repaint or touch up the paintwork.

Clean under shop counters as well as the obvious spaces. Wipe down surfaces, and if necessary clean windows. If there are kitchen areas, make sure they are clean and if there's a toilet, clean it and leave enough toilet paper for the next person.

Make sure you show the landlord or letting agent the space before you return the keys, so there's no future dispute about the condition when you left. If you've made improvements, make sure they know. And make sure they get a box of chocolates or a bunch of flowers – it ensures they will remember you, and leaves some goodwill for your next pop up shop.



Organisations Using and Supporting Empty Shops

There are a range of national organisations which can give practical advice, support and help the development of your pop up shop.

Empty Shops Network

The Empty Shops Network is a champion for the reuse of empty shops and was founded by Dan Thompson, author of *Pop Up Business For Dummies*. They helped with our Transported pop up shops.

The network acts as a central point of contact and has handled enquiries from national media, as well as individual artists, arts organisations and local authorities. It has also acted as advocate for the sector in discussions with the government, publishing the Pop Up People report and feeding into the Portas High Street Review.

Link: <http://www.emptyshopsnetwork.co.uk>

Link: <http://www.popupreport.co.uk>

Transported

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Link: <http://www.transportedart.com>

a-n the Artists Information Company

a-n's publications and programmes are designed to meet the professional needs of artists and the visual arts sector, identifying changing trends and new needs. Founded in 1980, a-n the Artists Information Company is acknowledged as a leading UK agency supporting the practice of visual and applied artists. It is behind a membership scheme for practicing artists which includes insurance cover as a key benefit.

Link: <http://www.a-n.co.uk>

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development agency for the arts in England, distributing public money from the Government and the National Lottery. Contact your local office for more information.

Link: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>

East Street Arts

East Street Arts started in Leeds, but now works across England. With a focus on the development of artists through events, membership activities, professional development and studio/facility provision, East Street Arts also runs In Situ, a countrywide programme currently managing 70 spaces including empty shops and offices.

Link: <http://www.eaststreetarts.org.uk>

Report by Dan Thompson, Revolutionary Arts for Transported 2013





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Find out more at www.transportedart.com

Transported Consortium



Lincolnshire Community
and Voluntary Service



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