



### ***Notion Nanny***

**A collaborative touring project by Allison Smith developed with B+B**

**Saturday 15 October – Sunday 4 December 2005**

*Across country lanes and urban cross-roads, an itinerant apprentice offers ideas and articles of all sorts traditional and revolutionary, abundantly crafted in exchange for skilful demonstrations and social company.*

For *Notion Nanny* at Studio Voltaire, Allison Smith stops off on her ongoing journey around the UK on a search for traditional craft skills and dialogue on revolutionary art practice.

The project takes as its focal point a peddler doll, or 'Notion Nanny', fashioned in Allison's own image at life scale. This doll is based on the traditional peddler doll figure, popularly displayed in British households during the Victorian era. Traditionally dressed in a red cloak and holding a basket overflowing with miniature wares, the peddler doll commemorated the disappearing social custom of traders travelling the countryside, their baskets containing a tiny world of eighteenth century material culture, including examples of numerous crafts such as ceramics, tinware, printmaking and needlework.

Like 19<sup>th</sup> century porcelain dolls, Smith's peddler doll has ceramic limbs (made in a ceramics atelier in France), glass eyes, and a hand-stitched wig. Her costume, made with historical costume designers, includes a woolen red cloak and a black bonnet made in London with Jane Smith. Over the course of the project, the doll's basket will be filled with wares made by Smith in collaboration with artisans and craftspeople she encounters at each location.

As the re-imagined personification of a village character type, *Notion Nanny* tells the anthropological folktale of the contemporary artist, 'post-studio', peddling ideas and objects as well as crossing borders and provoking dialogue. Questioning the contemporary phenomenon of artists travelling between international art fairs and biennials, Smith's basket offers an antidote to the notion of the art exhibition and the role of the artist as 'exhibitor at the fair'. In *Notion Nanny*, the peddler doll serves as a mobile cornucopia, a museum of herself and a repository for production and exchange.

*Notion Nanny* has travelled from Grasmere, Cumbria in August 2005 and will be travelling on to Oswestry, Shropshire in Spring 2006 in association with Craftspace Touring.

[www.notionnanny.net](http://www.notionnanny.net)

B+B is the independent curatorial partnership of Sarah Carrington and Sophie Hope.

Supported by Arts Council England and The Jerwood Charity.