

Wapke Feenstra

## Former Farmland

*Former Farmland* is a site-specific art project that, in a double sense, demonstrates our constricted and simultaneously expanded levels of perception by means of the latest mobile telecommunications technologies and local agricultural products.

Wapke Feenstra is co-founder of the “myvillages” artists’ association. For many years now, her artistic work has focused on rural environments and has reflected on the relationship between the city and the country, on society and its traditions, and on nature.

She interacts with people and describes in text and photos subjective experiences and unique features of various different regions. In going about this, she always follows individual suggestions she receives from the local populace, and intentionally makes us aware of the “small, inconspicuous things” that we often overlook as we go about our daily routines.

The city and the countryside are continuously changing as a result of industrialization and commercialization. But how are our relations to land and the soil, our ways of obtaining the food we eat, and our forms of behavior also changing as a result of this? And what interrelationship exists between all of this and our selves, our spirit and our body? For the most part, it’s the big issues that demonstrate how small we are. As the daughter of a Dutch farmers’ family, Wapke Feenstra places tremendous importance on dealing in her work with country life and farmers’ knowledge about “their” earth. She photographs farmers and collects their stories—above all those who must submit to the expanding borders of the metropolis. And even if they’re often able to sell their land for good money, their knowledge about how to work this fertile soil is left behind, having been rendered worthless. But it’s usually these very details that leave a lasting mark on us and our (urban) landscapes. They’re a part of our culture that it’s incumbent upon us to become aware of again.

In and around Zaragoza is where Wapke Feenstra launched the first installment of *Former Farmland*, a project she envisioned as a series. At the 2008 Ars Electronica, she’ll be expanding her field research efforts to include Linz. Visitors to developments on the outskirts of town that have been constructed here in recent decennia will have the histories of the places “left behind” sent directly to their cellphone. If visitors happen to be absorbed in a long-distance call at the moment the message arrives, then, thanks to a complex mobile telecommunications technology, they’ll suddenly come to realize—at this moment, at the very latest—exactly what soil they happen to be standing upon.

Created as part of the “Overtures” series, *Former Farmland* works on several levels of experience to shed light on how we deal with our resources and local cultural heritage in a mobile, globally networked world.

Text: Serafine Lindemann  
Translated from German by Mel Greenwald.

<http://www.formerfarmland.org>, <http://www.wapke.nl>, <http://www.myvillages.org>  
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