

# Shopping in the Renaissance



# Premise

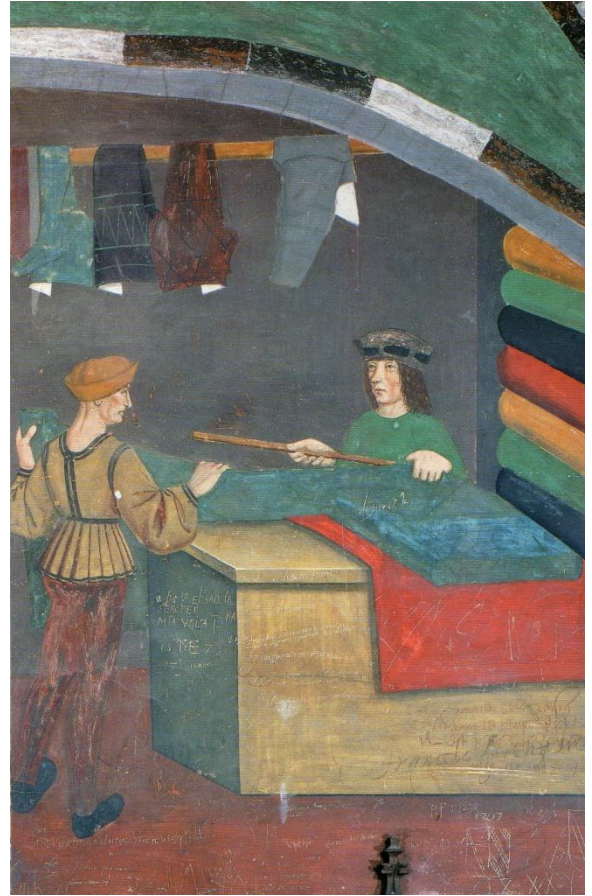
The inspiration for this is centered on "Shopping in the Renaissance" by Evelyn Welch. She centers her research on Italy (most notably Venice), mostly because of the large amount of existing structures and ledgers from the Renaissance available. I realized when reading the book what opportunity we have to make our shopping experiences more authentic, from what we use shopping, to how we lay out the markets at our camping events.

Rather than printing out this presentation, it is available via burned CD here at Collegium (for a small fee), or you may just go to <http://myweb.cableone.net/amefinch/Braden/index.html> and download the .pdf file there (3MB).

My sources for this presentation are from the afore mentioned "Shopping in the Renaissance" (ISBN 0-300-10752-8) and a small piece from the November 2010 National Geographic.

# Outline

- Seeing Shopping
  - Markets
  - Making the sale
  - *Monte in Banco* (street shows)
- Details of Shopping
  - Measurements
  - Money
  - Price & Value
  - Credit
- Geography
  - Time
    - Days to shop or not to shop
    - Time to shop
  - Place
    - Shop Signage and location
    - Fixtures and Fittings



# Outline, continued

- Acquisition
  - Fairs
  - Bidding & Gambling
    - Pawns & Pledge Auctions
    - Lotteries
- Renaissance Consumers
  - Men/Women in the Marketplace
- Making Our Shopping more Authentic





# Seeing Shopping

- Markets

Two types of locations: temporary stalls during market days, festivals and fairs, and a fixed location. The culture looked down upon re-sellers for goods. The producer (e.g. cobbler, butcher) would have a representative do the selling, but not sell to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party for re-sale. Imported goods would come in through a merchant, who would pay the taxes and make the local sale. Any retail only merchants would have to identify themselves in some way (and pay a tax).

- Making the sale

Casual sales (daily expenditures- grocers, basic apothecary, meats) were made at the shop, but more serious sales (high-end customers, specialty items) were done out of sight, even at the home of the customer. Nobles never participated in casual sales in Italy, they sent staff to do so. In England, it was the head woman of the house who lead the shopping, but in Italy the noblewoman might browse, but send people afterward (mostly male) to negotiate purchases. Through these interactions between the staff and the merchants did cross-class news and gossip spread.

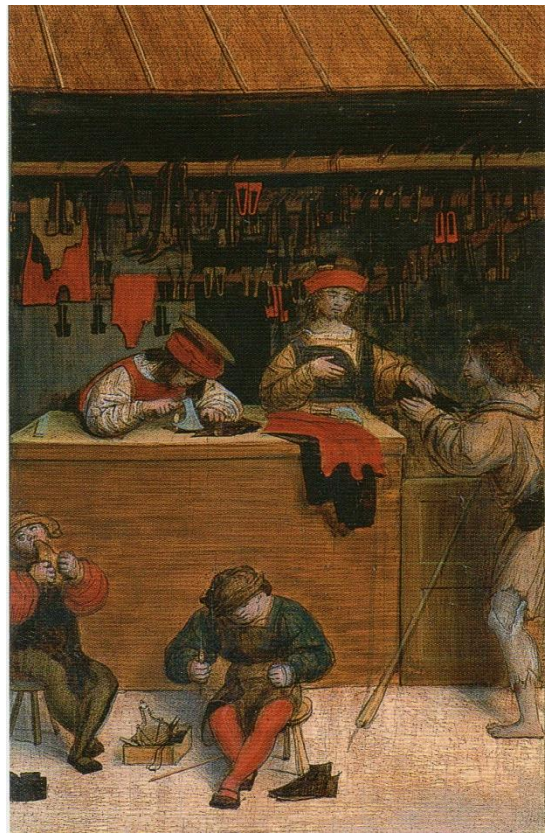
- *Monte in Banco* (street shows)

- Also called *montebanks*, These street performers would perform their sales pitch to an audience, keeping them entertained (it slices, it dices! sham-wow!) through an enticement. They would set a stage and have costumed actors.











# The Details of Shopping

- Measurements

Cities set standards of measure, length, volume, and mass. Families might have/use their own set of weights when making purchases.

- Money

Coins were different from city to city, and changed when the city-state rulers changed. Part of your negotiations would include what monies you were paying with (if at all). The best coinage to have were Royal Florins (Italy) for they were equally good all over the peninsula.

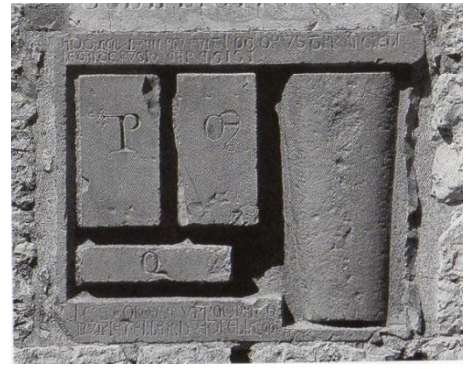
- Price & Value

Many purchases (particularly significant ones) were not made in cash, but in goods/services. As such, it was important to know the value of what you wanted to buy and what you were willing to barter, because all aspects of a sale were negotiable (who's measures, what type of payment, where the sale would be made)

- Credit

Most of the time purchases were made with credit, or a third party would make a purchase for a noble family. They would not get money for the purchase, but goods, services, and influence. Example: The Doge's wife would like some new silks such that cannot be found locally, so she contacts a cobbler with whom she has done business before. He purchases the silks in another town and sends them to her, and her response is a velvet dress for his wife, and a necklace of precious stones... and knowledge that he is someone she can trust and he can use her and her family's name when promoting business.





# Geography (Time)

- Time

The city (and church) set certain days to shop or not to shop. Typically church days were excluded from having open shops, except in the cases of critical services (re: Apothecary). However, shops would work around this by having specific shoppers send word ahead about their wish to shop-behind closed doors- and make purchases out of sight anyway.

Cities would also set a day during the week when shops were expected (by law) to set a booth at the open market in the central square. They would also set religious festivals where there would be successive days that the booth would be open on either side of the religious day in the middle of the festival. Cities would set an annual calendar with these dates, always careful not to conflict with festivals in neighboring/competing cities.

Hours to be open were pretty well set between the major prayer times. In the morning, you would have Matins (early morning) and Lauds (late morning), then shops would be open until the bells cried the call to Vespers (around 6pm). With church service framing the shopping hours, cities would utilize the area near the church so as to maximize commerce income (taxes) and church attendance.





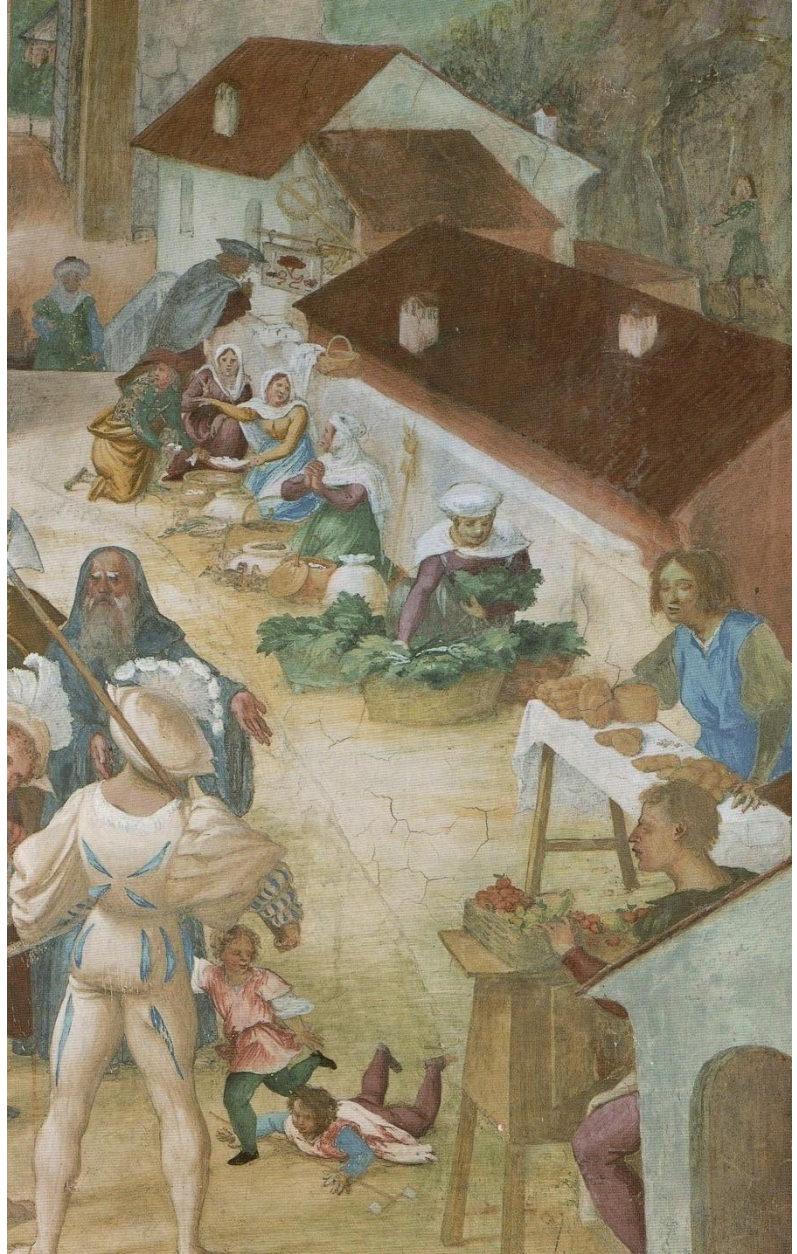
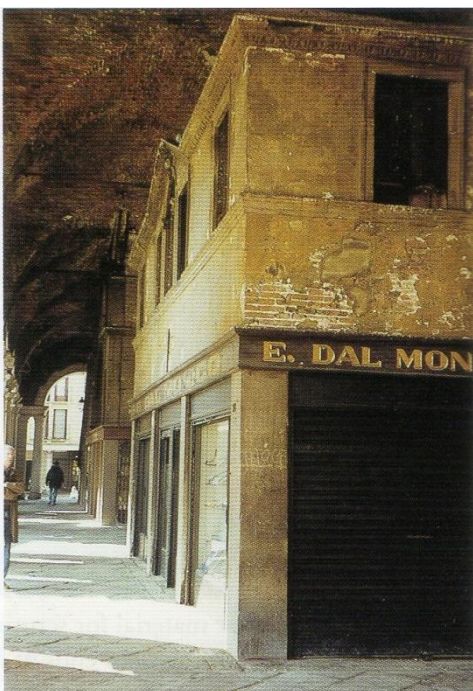
# Geography (Location)

- Place

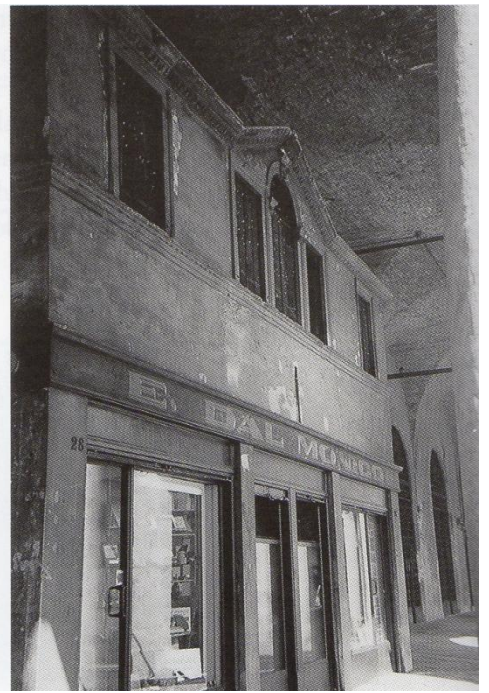
Shop signs were distinct names, usually identified by common objects (Doge's Head Inn, Two Flasks Tavern, Inn of the Moor)



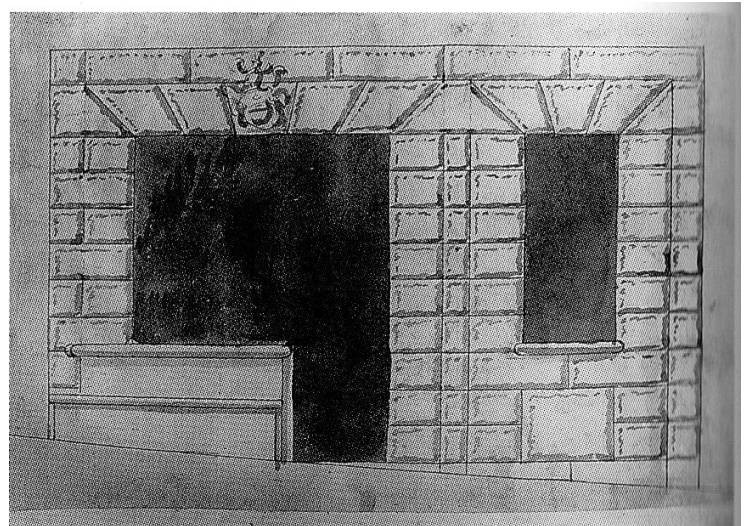
Shops were rarely/never stand-alone buildings. They were the lowest floor of a larger building and would be rented out by the building owner on extended lease.







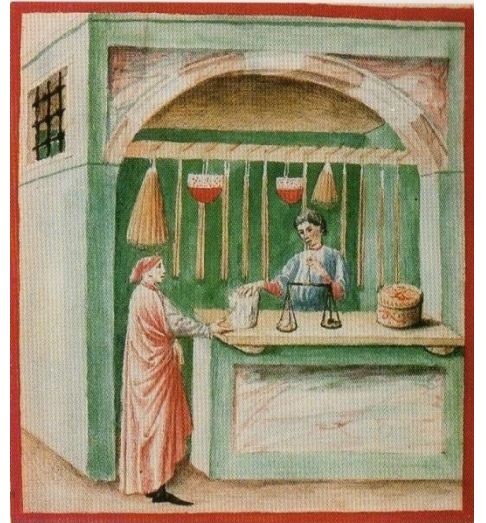
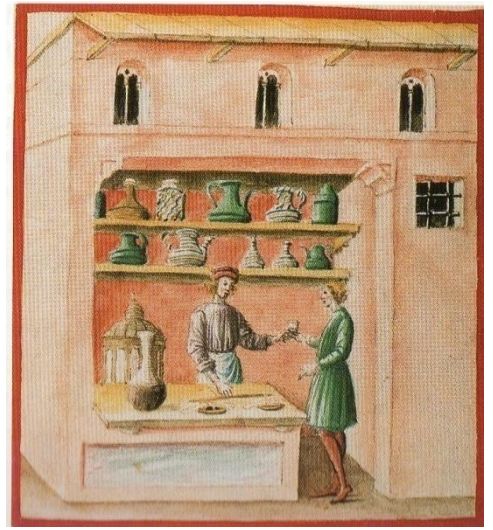
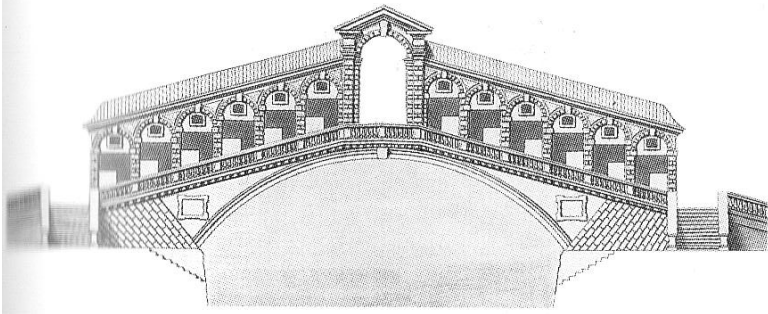
There was also a very distinct shape to most shop entrances, a set of thigh-waist high platforms near the entrance where wares could be displayed. Today modern stores still use that entry island to catch your eye. The platforms were frequently designed into the entry.



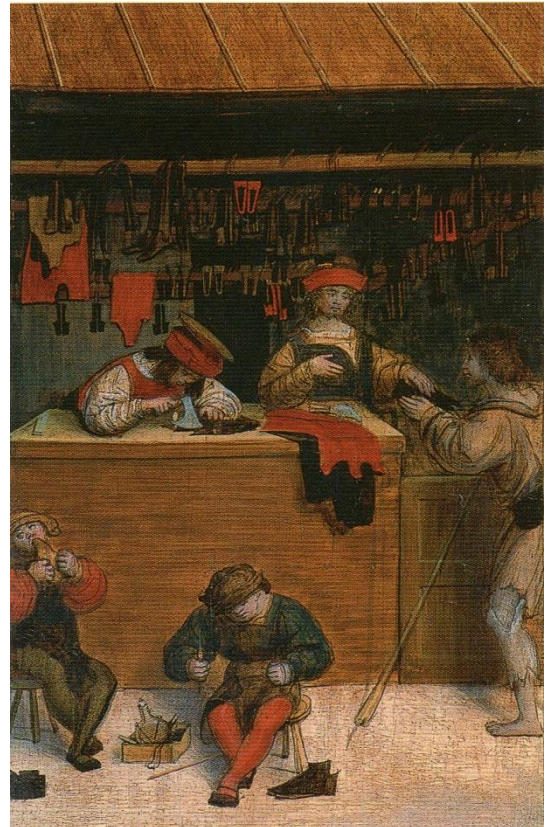














# Acquisition

## Fairs

Fairs surrounded festivals, usually for some religious event (Feast of St. Mark, Feast of St. Martin). Many temporary stalls would be set up much like an extended run of market days.









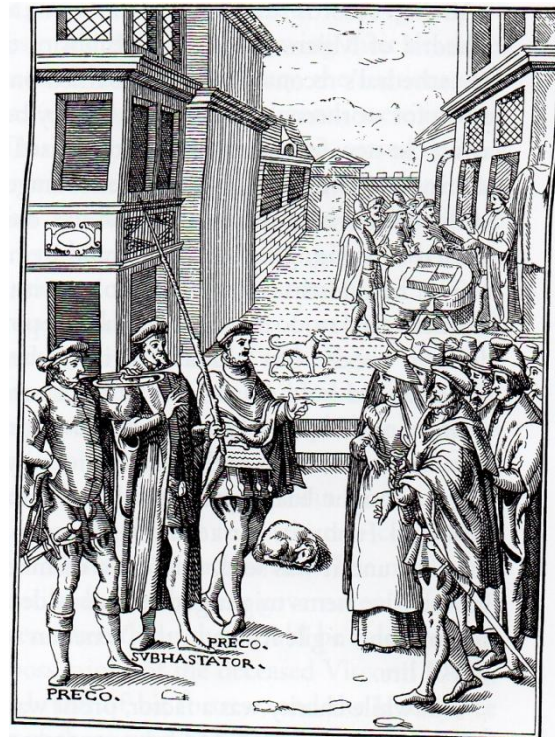
# Bidding & Gambling

The people of affluence would not usually have lots of valuables on hand at home, being unused. They would pawn everything, since usury laws controlled excessive interest charged on loans. It was commonplace to pawn even down to the linen napkins, and pairs of shoes in order to have liquidity when needed (taxes, foreign purchases). The laws in the cities encouraged this. In one case, you could leave items in hock for a year before the shop could send out an announcement of the upcoming pawn auction in 30 days, still leaving you time to repay the debt and recover your belongings... usually by pawning something else to pay for it. For shops, pawn auctions would result in a net loss, because the maximum auction price could be what the pawn amount was for, and then the city took taxes from the auction proceeds.

Pledge auctions occurred when families would donate to an auction, offering up no longer used items to benefit a church or civil project. There were also estate auctions, where the deceased left many items in hock and they would be brought together for a central auction, with the proceeds going toward paying off the individual debts.

Lotteries came to Italy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

King Francis I of France created a national lottery in 1505, and Queen Elizabeth chartered a national lottery in England in 1566, drawn in 1569. It became a painless and popular way to raise money by governments and the church, and private lotteries followed suit. Private, unregulated lotteries became such a problem that Venice had, at one point during the Renaissance, a department to regulate and crack down on illegitimate lotteries.





# Renaissance Consumers

Who shopped depended a lot on where you were geographically. In England, the head woman of the house saw to it personally all of the necessary shopping.

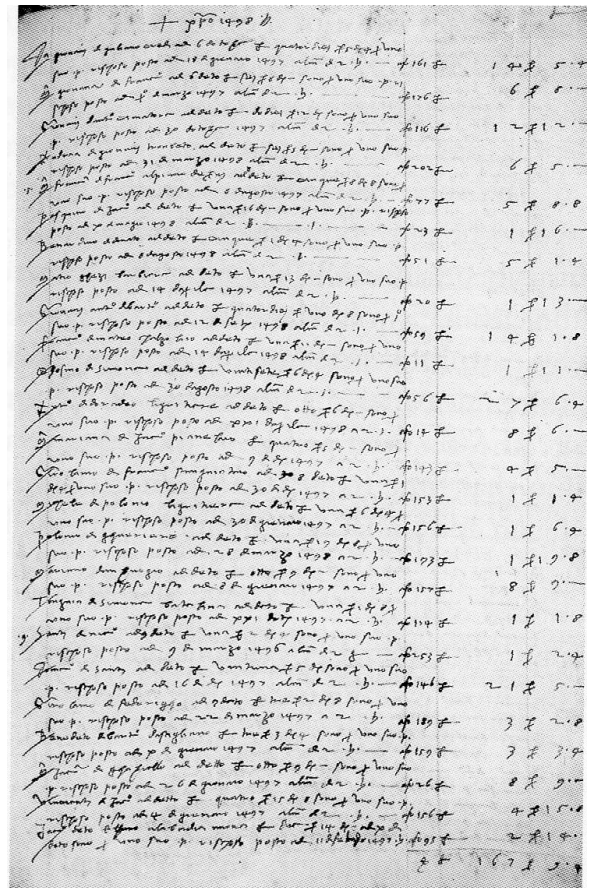
In Italy, it was a traditionally male role to keep track of the books, but there are many examples of widows seamlessly taking over the house finances. Servants of well-to-do families (usually male) would do the shopping, creating concerns that the staff would do an adequate job of getting good bargains.

The affluent would frequently have goods brought to them by the merchants at their own home.

Even if someone of station would go shopping in town, any negotiations or purchases would be done out of plain view.

When visiting dignitaries would come to town, affluent families would loan back to merchants their best stuff so as to make the city look so much more opulent. Since one would never make an on the spot purchase, there was little risk of your personal treasure being sold.

There was a documented instance when a visiting monarch unexpectedly showed up, and the de Medici family quickly emptied several store rooms in order to stock the city merchants.





# Making our Shopping more Authentic

We currently shop based on what we see and use as most convenient, but with little knowledge of the equipment used in period.

Baskets are a mainstay in a variety of shapes and sizes, carried on shoulders, on the arms or rested on the top of the head.



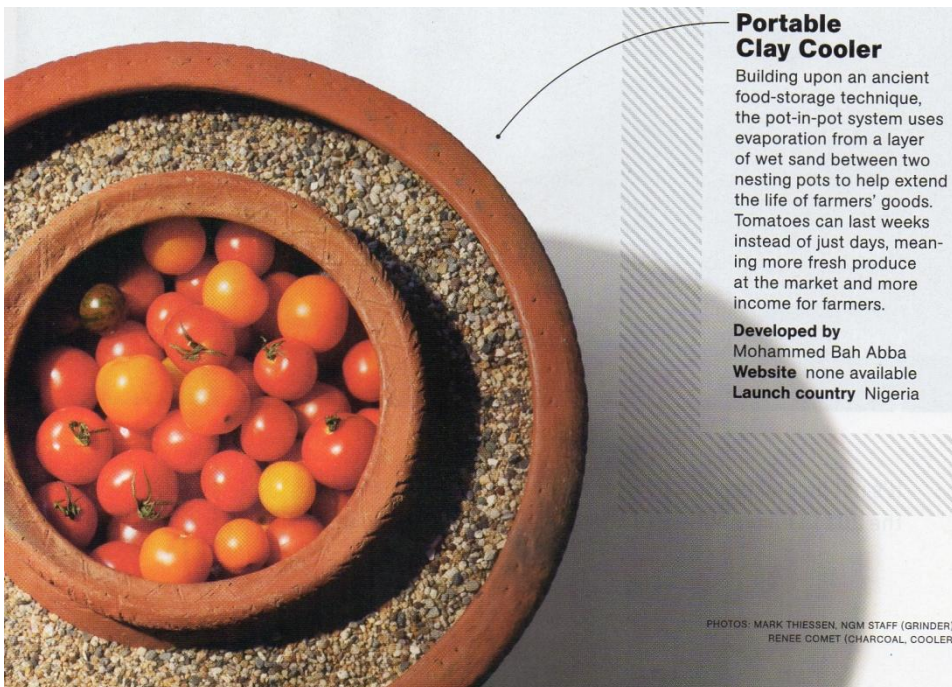


# Food Display

Baskets were used to show produce for sale, but today in hot and dry Artemisia, fruit would quickly lose its luster if left out for more than a few hours.



So, how about this modern invention based on period practices?



## Portable Clay Cooler

Building upon an ancient food-storage technique, the pot-in-pot system uses evaporation from a layer of wet sand between two nesting pots to help extend the life of farmers' goods. Tomatoes can last weeks instead of just days, meaning more fresh produce at the market and more income for farmers.

### Developed by

Mohammed Bah Abba

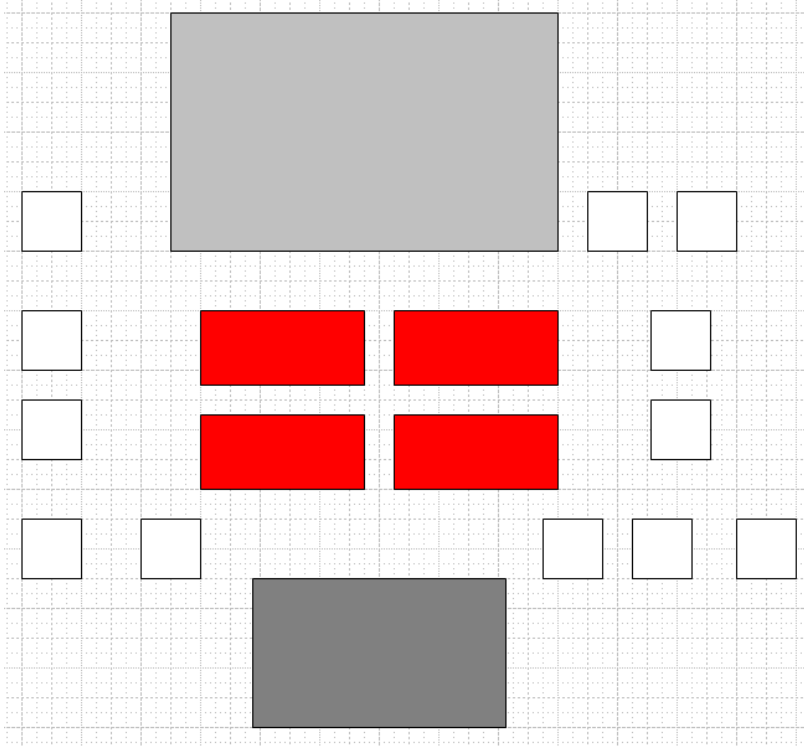
**Website** none available

**Launch country** Nigeria

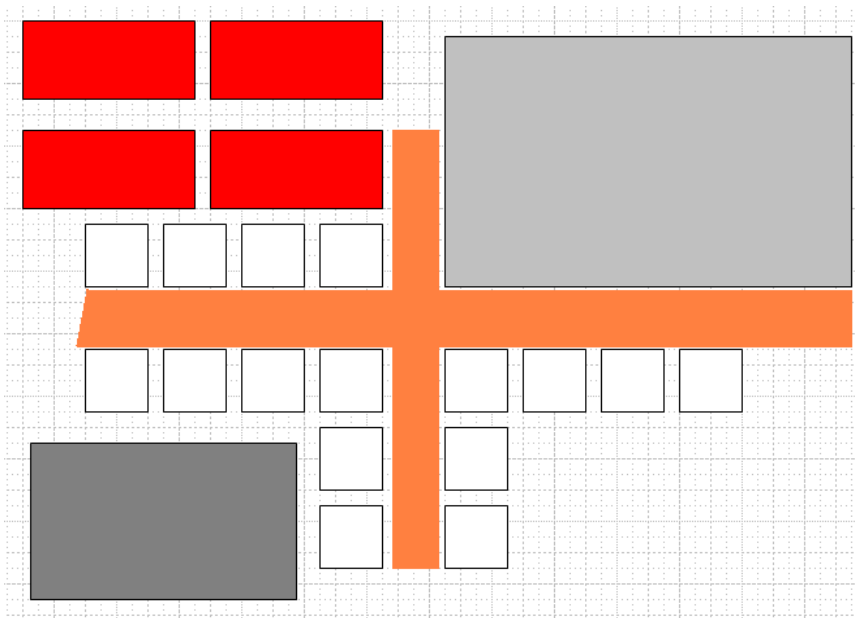


# Authentic Layout

One key and noticeable change we can look at is laying out the merchants in more of a market friendly environment. Take Uprising as an example:



Would it not be more conducive to popularizing shopping if your layout inspired travel through the merchant area? (possibly with some shade put up over the shopping lanes)





# Conclusion

Just like belts, shoes, tableware... shopping is just one more aspect of Our Society that we can concentrate on, work to make it more authentic and better enhance Our Dream. One more step closer to 'being there.'