

acme

Supporting art & artists since 1972

SUMMER 2006

This bulletin is also available in large print and on audio tape.



50 new-build studios in Peckham now open

This special edition of Acme Studios' Bulletin has been published to coincide with the completion of our 50 new-build artists' studios in Sumner Road, Peckham, London SE15. The new studio block, The Galleria Studios, will be formally opened by David Lammy, Minister for Culture, on 20 June.

The Galleria Studios are a vital addition to the stock of affordable artists' studios in London where there are so few buildings to meet the large and growing demand for suitable low-cost space. The majority of studio

buildings in the capital are held on leases, many of them short-term, and the whole sector is very vulnerable to the impact of major developments and ever-increasing land values. The Galleria Studios is the fourth building to be owned by Acme; one of only nine permanent studio buildings out of over 70 in the capital.

This new project is not only vital in securing permanent affordable studio space for generations of artists to come, but it also provides a successful model to encourage future

The Galleria. Architectural visualisation by Smoothe

schemes. The addition of a permanent resource for artists is in itself important, but how the project came into existence may prove to be even more significant; perhaps the most important feature of this development is that it has been achieved in partnership with a commercial property developer, Barratt Homes.

The completed studios are part of a larger housing development by Barratt which includes 98 apartments (23 of which are affordable) and our 50 studio units. The original site had been occupied by a print company which had decided to move elsewhere. The local authority, the

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London Borough of Southwark, was determined to maintain the employment use on the site as well as securing at least 25 per cent of the development as affordable housing. The partnership with Acme not only allowed Barratt to fulfil all the local authority's requirements – in fact there will be more artists on site than original employees of the print company – but it provided Barratt with a known outcome. Local authorities are keen to encourage mixed-use developments which combine housing, commercial and retail space because such schemes help create sustainable communities. Housing developers sometimes find commercial space hard to market and sell, with the result that such units often remain empty long after all the housing units have been occupied. The partnership with Acme not only provided a guaranteed sale of the commercial space, but also ensured 100 per cent occupation and activity from day one.

The inclusion of artists' studios in the scheme also provided an unusual and exciting feature which Barratt were quick to capitalise on in their marketing material. If the unique combination of housing and artists' studios did not actually increase the value of the apartments, it may well have helped sell them more quickly. It will be fascinating to see how this mix of residential and studio space will help engender a feeling of

community and we will be encouraging links between our artist tenants and our neighbours in the development.

In the past 'planning gain', the process by which, in return for planning consent, developers are required to provide a proportion of affordable housing and a contribution to improve local amenities, has rarely included cultural facilities. This is now being actively encouraged; the Mayor of London's cultural strategy promotes the idea of obliging developers to provide specified cultural facilities as part of larger projects for which they are seeking planning approval. The Galleria Studios is the first example of **affordable workspace** being created through the planning gain process in much the same way as **affordable housing**. In this instance the inclusion of affordable studios is a positive addition, welcomed by the developer, and is seen to 'add value' to the overall development.

Barratt main board director Clive Fenton, Chairman of the company's south region, said: "This is a very exciting project for us and particularly for our East London division. Just as

there is demand for well-designed, outstanding contemporary homes in London, there is also undoubtedly a need for properly-designed studio space for artists in London, and we are convinced of the cultural, economic and social value of a project like this.

"It's already clear that our residential buyers at The Galleria enjoy the idea of having a colony of working artists as their neighbours. Like the design of the building and the location, the studios are definitely seen as one of the development's attractions."

Acme has purchased a 155 year lease on the studio block from Barratt at a price sufficiently below the construction cost to enable us to guarantee affordable rents to artists in perpetuity. We have also been able to draw on funding from Arts Council England's Grants for the arts – capital programme towards the cost of this project, which has had the effect of releasing capital which we can now invest in future schemes.

The 50 studios have been built to a very high standard and we are delighted with the final

THE GALLERIA STUDIOS, SUMNER ROAD, PECKHAM, LONDON SE15

Key Facts:

50 studio units: 46 arranged over 4 floors (ground to third) with 4 at sub-basement level

Number of artists: 57

Total internal square footage: 16,111

Average studio square footage: 322

Inclusive rent charge: £8.50 per square foot per annum

Developer: Barratt East London

Contractor: Ardmore Construction Ltd.

Original architects: Dransfield Owens de Silva

Acme's consultant architect: Michael Johnson, naganjohnson

Acme's access consultant: Andrew Walker

building. We provided Barratt with a design brief and specification which we have developed over a number of years, working closely with artists. The final units vary in size from 300 to 600 square feet, have generous 3 metre high ceilings, and have been carefully designed to provide a balance between windows, providing good natural light, and large plastered working walls. There is a high level of sound and thermal insulation and a simple self-contained heating system for each unit. With the exception of one unit, the studios are fully accessible to people using wheelchairs and there are accessible shared wash-up rooms and WC facilities serving each floor. There is a large lift and a separate service staircase.

Artists at The Galleria

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Tolu Akanni | Ting-Fay Ho | Tim O'Riley |
| Suzie Balazs | Brian Hodgson | Paul Peden |
| Tony Benn | Robb Horsley | Pauline Place |
| Stanislas Blatton | Charles Hustwick | Liz Rideal |
| Alex Blum | Zebedee Jones | Sorcha Rooney |
| Eva Bosch | Dianne Kaufman | Michaela Ross |
| Vivienne Boucherat | Stephanie Kingston | Terry Ryan |
| Pepe Vives | Linda Leroy | Julian Sharples |
| Burguera | Dominic Lewis | Helen Silverlock |
| Francis Carr | Kate Love | Lucy Soni |
| Bella Easton | Pete Mariner | Sunil Soni |
| Martin Edmonds | David Martin | Rebecca Stevenson |
| Jenny Franklin | Denis Masi | Isa Suarez |
| Paolo Giardi | Ian McCaughrean | Tokuko Takeshita |
| Jane Goodwin | Louisa Minkin | Susie Treister |
| David Griffiths | Michelle Molyneux | Francis Wardale |
| Elizabeth | Carly Morris | Grant Watson |
| Hannaford | Duncan Mountford | Michael Wille |
| Mark Haywood | Nicky Neate | Kendra Zink |
| John Hicks | Rosa Nguyen | |

Acme Studios and Southwark Council award a studio residency worth £15,000 to a local artist

A Camberwell artist has been awarded a one-year studio residency worth £5,000 together with a £10,000 grant by Acme Studios and Southwark Council as part of a new initiative to support the development of art within the borough. Local artist **Isa Suarez** will spend a year working in one of 50 new-build studios at The Galleria in Peckham.

This is Southwark's first artist in residence scheme and the first time Acme has worked in partnership with the local authority to extend the scope of its activities in the borough. Acme's relationship with Southwark however goes back many years. In the mid-70s we were managing many short-life houses providing low-cost combined housing and studio space for artists. Many of these artists settled permanently and continue to make a vital contribution to the life of the area. The Galleria is also not our

first studio building in Southwark. In 1991 we established studios at Larnaca Works in Grange Walk, SE1, but due to redevelopment these will close later this year. Many of the artists due to be displaced from Larnaca Works have taken up new studios at The Galleria; thus securing their workspace in the borough.

Acme provides self-contained, private studio space for artists and often the public will only be aware of these spaces during open studio events. The residency programme will help to make our new building more visible and forge real and lasting relationships with our local community.

Residency artist Isa said: "This award gives me the chance to develop my work as a composer, performer and sound artist within the Southwark

community and will also help me develop my current commissions planned for this coming year in London and abroad. This studio is good not only for my Southwark residency work but also for my practice in general. A free studio plus £10,000 means I have peace of mind financially and am able to experiment with new ideas.

"I now have an ideal studio space within the lively and vibrant community where I live and work, together with financial help and support from Acme Studios, Southwark Council and The South London Gallery – it is the perfect scenario."

"I had been looking for studio space in Southwark but found it extremely hard to find something which was suitable – everything was expensive and in bad condition. My work space is in a small, private house, but at The Galleria I will be able to physically try out new ideas which I haven't been able to before. I want to work with surround sound and I need a space big enough to allow me to do that.

It is exciting to have the support of Acme Studios, Southwark Council and South London Gallery. It feels like having support and freedom at the same time. Isa Suarez

“This residency provides me with longer term security – I know I have 12 months to create a more ambitious project than I ever have before. It is exciting to have the support of Acme Studios, Southwark Council and South London Gallery. It feels like having support and freedom at the same time. It is also a luxury not to have to think about finance. I think the next 12 months will have a huge impact on my work.”

This major new programme is supported by Southwark Council. Anya Whitehead, Arts Manager at Southwark, said: “We’re delighted that Southwark now has its very own artist in residence. As well as developing her own practice, Isa will be working with local community groups to create work that is all about the people in Southwark, which we believe is a great way to support enjoyment of arts in the borough.”

The South London Gallery, one of London’s major independent public galleries for contemporary art, will provide the artist in residence with four studio visits throughout the year by the curator and director.

Meet the artist:

Originally from the Basque region of South West France, Isa has lived in Southwark for the last 12 years, an area she describes as: “lively, culturally mixed and vibrant”. Trained as a musician, Isa is a composer for film, a song writer, a performer and a sound artist. Music forms a crucial part of her sound art work, which is often based on everyday life: people’s experiences, travels, nature and urban places as well as the human body. Her practice is inter-disciplinary, using sound, text, video and photography as a way of expressing social issues and suggesting feelings and atmospheres.

Isa has exhibited art works at Tate Britain (*River Voices* – 2005, in collaboration with artist Tracey Bush), Whitechapel Art Gallery (*Suitcase* – 2001, as part of Ella Gibbs’ *Temporary Accommodation*) and Musée d’Art Moderne de Guéthary in France (*à trouble sens*, solo exhibition, 2003) among many others. She has worked on projects locally and across the

world, involving people from a wide range of backgrounds, ages and abilities. Isa invites participants to take part in every stage of the creative process, especially through a hands-on approach to technology. Her interest in this residency comes from her personal experience of living and working in Southwark:

“I have found that issues around a sense of belonging are recurrent within all generations in this area. My approach will be to involve residents with themes which are relevant to them and integrate their thoughts and feelings into a sound art piece. I would like to engage with all generations living locally, giving each the chance to express themselves through a series of participatory games and hands-on activities.

“A lot of my work is related to memory, social issues and history and is site-specific. When I work with a group I am interested in finding out how they are affected by a particular subject and from that, I collect material which I then process until it becomes a piece of art work. My other work includes composing music for films – in this situation I make music to suggest moods and emotions.

“From my experience of working with the community, I find a lot of people are creative and curious about the way artists work. I feel it’s about being sensitive – as an artist, I can help lead people into something new.

“As artists we are just people, but we can bring another dimension to challenge or simply share ideas and thoughts on art and life. Art can be intimidating – I try to make it more accessible through workshops and collaborative projects which culminate in a proper piece of art work.”

Isa Suarez
photo Hugo Glendinning



Mark Haywood

ARTIST, THE GALLERIA STUDIOS

Before moving to his studio at The Galleria, artist Mark Haywood was an Acme tenant at Larnaca Works, which is due to close down in the near future for re-development by the owners of the building.

Having a studio at the heart of a housing development containing private and affordable apartments suits Mark, since much of the work he does has a community element to it. At the moment he is working with school children from Tower Hamlets on a site specific installation based on the Royal Mint, just across the road from the Tower of London. He says: "I think mixed communities like the one here at The Galleria are really positive –

I want to work with the local community here and not be cut-off in a studio."

Moving to The Galleria has made a big impact on the way Mark works: "At Larnaca Works there wasn't space for me to have a clean area, so I had to keep my office at home. I need my computer and a phone for running projects and so a clean area, which I can close the door on to separate it from the area that I get messy, is really important.

"Over the last few years, I have used my computer more and more. When I had a studio at Larnaca Works, I'd get stuck at home, when I really needed to be in my studio creating works.

There is also more security here, so I know my equipment will be safe.

"This is a much nicer space. I can invite people here to see my work, which makes us, as artists, look more professional. I kind of miss working in a beaten up old warehouse but not wearing three pairs of gloves – this is a seven days a week space."

Mark Haywood
photo Hugo Glendinning



Rebecca Stevenson

ARTIST, THE GALLERIA STUDIOS

Sculptor Rebecca Stevenson began looking for studio space after graduating with an M.A. in Fine Art from the Royal College of Art in 2000. She describes her experience of looking for suitable and affordable studio space as: “a real nightmare”.

Living in south London, Rebecca found a lack of studio space in the area that was large enough for her work and came within budget. She says:

“As a sculptor I need a big space which means bigger rent. It’s difficult to share a studio with another artist because the materials I use can create dust or fumes.”

Rebecca first heard about Acme Studios when she was studying for a B.A. at Chelsea College of Art

during a professional practice talk. She says:

“I decided to go on the waiting list then because I always knew I would need a studio.”

It proved to be a good move because once The Galleria development was complete, Rebecca became eligible for a studio. She describes why having a studio at The Galleria makes such a big difference to her life and her work:

“The studio is perfect – close to where I live and in a good location, it is self-contained, warm and a great size. These may seem like basic things to have, but it is such a revelation to me and completely disproves the notion that artists have to suffer!”

The fact that Acme owns the building is a very important factor for Rebecca:

“In my previous studio, the rent was always going up, the roof leaked and there was the threat of it closing down all together. This studio enables me to plan and think in a long-term way, which I have never been able to do in the past.”

Rebecca Stevenson
photo Hugo Glendinning



Architects Landolt & Brown to work with Acme on new studio project

Arts Council England's award of £2,000,000 to Acme Studios under its Grants for the arts – capital (GfAC) programme has not only helped us to acquire our 50 new-build studios at The Galleria in Peckham, London SE15, but will also support a rolling programme of studio developments, which will include both new constructions and the conversion of existing buildings.

One of our proposed new schemes involves a roof-top extension to our studio building at Copperfield Road in Mile End, London E3. The scheme will involve the demolition of the existing 4th floor extension (currently occupied as our offices) to free up the whole of the roof area for the development of additional floors of artists' studios.

Although we have thirty years experience of creating artists' studios, our previous developments have either involved the conversion of existing buildings or, like The Galleria, have been based on 'inherited' designs. This project is our first chance to develop a new-build scheme from inception and an important opportunity to develop a model design, which could be applied to future developments.

We have high ambitions for the project which include not only achieving a model of artists' studio design, but also low-cost solutions to every element within the project. This is an opportunity for Acme to achieve best practice in all areas and we have been helped considerably by our CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment) Enabler, Peter

Morris of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM), whose advice has been made available to us by Arts Council England through the GfAC programme.

The first stage in the project was to gain a complete understanding of our existing building and to test a range of options for adding studios to the roof. In November last year we advertised very widely for a professional team, led by an architect, to undertake a technical feasibility study. We were overwhelmed by the level of interest and the quality and experience of the 32 architectural practices who tendered for the work. After interviewing six teams we appointed Landolt & Brown to undertake the study.

Completed in March the study is a very thorough examination of the existing building and the development options. We now have enough information to allow us to move forward to the next stage and to commission Landolt & Brown to carry out design work to RIBA Stage D so that we can submit a full planning application for the scheme.

Jan Landolt and Adam Brown started a new architectural practice, Landolt & Brown, in September 2005. With over thirty years of architectural experience between them, Jan and Adam have worked for large architectural firms on a range of projects including the Roundhouse in Camden, the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill on Sea, Hong Kong Airport and Canary Wharf.

In setting up a new architectural practice, Adam and Jan wanted

to make cultural arts projects the core of their work. Adam says: "We thought the studio development at Copperfield Road sounded like a great project. I had heard of Acme Studios through my brother who is an artist and knew that they would be an interesting organisation to work with."

The Copperfield Road development has brought together two organisations which are built around a strong partnership between the founders: Adam and Jan have known each other since meeting at school when they were eight years old, while David and Jonathan met when they were 18 and have been working together since they set up Acme Studios in 1972. For Adam, it gave Acme's Copperfield Road project extra appeal: "I like the way Jonathan and David work together – they are different characters with different skills, in much the same way as Jan and myself."

Landolt & Brown and Acme Studios also shared the same vision when it came to planning this new development: "David and Jonathan had a clear brief, which was to provide low-cost, accessible studio space for artists." said Adam. "We were chosen for our practical and down-to-earth approach. This project isn't based on architectural vanity – it needed a pragmatic, problem-solving approach, out of which comes good architecture."

This project isn't based on architectural vanity – it needed a pragmatic, problem-solving approach, out of which comes good architecture.

Adam Brown

“We didn’t go into the project with pre-conceived ideas, but we were very keen not to end up with a series of options from the technical feasibility study which wouldn’t provide a clear direction and idea of what would be the right thing to do.”

“This project needed some clever ideas. The biggest challenge was the money and the technical planning. Building new studios four storeys up to achieve a low-cost build while causing minimum disruption to artists, meant making use of lots of new technology.”

Landolt & Brown are currently lending their design skills to the practical fields of transport, commercial office design, education and housing. However, the main focus of their work is on projects with a creative heart, with clients who share their passion: “Working with Acme has been an enjoyable and fulfilling process. It is great to work with inspiring, open-minded people who encourage you to take each idea a little bit further.

“Architecture can create and change aspirations – our aim is to raise the spirits of everyone who walks into one of our buildings and make them feel a bit better about life.”

Ben Cove
photo Hugo Glendinning



New artist for bursary at The Fire Station

Acme Studios welcomed artist **Ben Cove** to its work/live residency programme at The Fire Station, Gillender Street, E14, in May. Started in 1997, this is Acme’s third residency programme at The Fire Station and our third bursary for an artist with a disability.

Acme’s work/live programme at The Fire Station is one of the most directly supportive schemes for artists in the UK, providing combined studio and living space at low rents as well as special bursaries: rent-free space and grants of £5,000 a year. Ben has been awarded a bursary for two and a half years.

Thirty artists have now benefited from residencies at The Fire Station since 1997, selected from a nation-wide open submission. This fixed-term residency scheme is intended to allow artists more time to really concentrate on developing their work and professional careers.

Ben has been working as a full-time visual artist after graduating from Sheffield Hallam University in 2001. He produces work across a range of media for solo and group exhibitions. Before moving to

London in May, Ben was based in Manchester but he has exhibited works in London, Cumbria, Manchester and Leeds, and in Poland. Ben says: “People tend to think of me as a painter, mainly because of the work I did after my B.A.” But he works in a wide range of media: “Partly to keep my own interest, but largely because I choose the media which is most appropriate to my ideas for each work.”

After graduating, Ben went back to Manchester, but found it hard to find an accessible studio: “I rang every studio in Manchester and ended up paying more than I needed just to find a place to work.”

The Fire Station was bought, chiefly with funding from the National Lottery, and developed to provide purpose-designed work/live and non-residential studios, properly accessible to disabled artists.

Ben has found the work/live arrangement at The Fire Station particularly helpful:

“It is important for me to be around my work, so I have time to think about it and look at it.

“Having a studio that was separate from where I lived meant I worked at specific times, because I had to do all my administration at home. It also meant taking certain equipment with me each day, only to realise that what I really needed that day was at home.

“I’m naturally a person who works later in the day, but my last studio wasn’t in a very safe area, so it wasn’t always practical to leave late at night.”

Ben will be studying part-time on a Masters degree course at Goldsmiths College from September 2006 because he wants the opportunity to discuss his work and receive critical feedback from tutors and peers. He views the next two and a half years "as a period of concentrated development", saying: "This residency is unique because it gives me

a place to live and work without having to worry about finance."

The other artists currently at The Fire Station are: Kate Broad, Lisa Cheung, Maggie Hills, Robert Holyhead, Lizzie Hughes, Riccardo Iacono, Samson Kambalu, Damien Roach, Jack Southern and Ming Wong.

artists' studio provision for members, their partner organisations and other interested parties, extending mutual benefit from common resources.

Acme's role has been to co-ordinate the work of the steering group. The formation of the national federation will be a culmination of the efforts of Acme and others to create a body representing a distinctive and vital sector which has been in existence for at least 40 years.

In May 2005 Acme published the first ever database of artists' studio organisations alongside the national survey: **A Register of artists' studio groups and organisations in England**. This is currently being updated and the new version will be available from our website from mid-June. The updated register now includes 134 studio organisations (130 in May 2005): six new organisations have been added, one is currently closed pending redevelopment and a further group has folded. It is expected that this database will be developed and maintained by the national federation once it has been formed.

A Register of artists' studio groups and organisations in England – June 2006 can be downloaded from our website: www.acme.org.uk – go to Supporting the Sector, Publications

The formation of the national federation will be a culmination of efforts to create a body representing a distinctive and vital sector which has been in existence for at least 40 years.

Acme facilitates formation of National Studios Organisation

In our Autumn 2005 bulletin we reported on moves to create a national organisation which would represent the interests of affordable studio providers across England. In May last year, the first National Studios Forum took place at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in London. Supported by Arts Council England, it was convened to enable representatives from across England to meet to discuss what kind of organisation they would like to establish to represent their collective interests.

At the end of the forum 14 delegates put themselves, or their organisation, forward as inaugural steering group members (including Acme) with Naomi Dines, of Occupation Studios in London, nominated as Chair.

Support for the formation of a national body to represent the needs and concerns of the artists' studios sector has been voiced over many years, and confirmed by our 2004 survey of nearly 120 studio groups and organisations. With the financial support of Arts Council England, the steering group, which now represents the full geographical spread of the sector, has been working in

consultation with potential members to develop a representative body. The steering group has now met three times and is currently in the process of forming a new charitable organisation: the **National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers**.

Membership of the federation will be open to all those engaged in providing affordable studio space for artists working in England, as well as other facilities and activities that benefit artists and the wider public. Its role will be to help secure, sustain, improve and increase affordable studio provision, addressing many of the needs and concerns common to such organisations. The federation will also act as advocate, broker and champion, influencing public policy, decision-making and opinion to support the valuable work of the studios sector, and the artists that it supports, in their contribution to the social fabric, cultural and creative life of the nation.

Working in co-operation with existing organisations across England, the national federation will become the principal source of information, advice and support on all aspects of

Important new research published on affordable rents for artists' studios in London

Capital Studios is an advocacy programme which aims to raise awareness of artists' workspace as an important element in urban renewal programmes, with a view to creating opportunities for long-term sustainability and growth. Supported by Arts Council England, London, the programme is led by Acme Studios on behalf of affordable studio providers throughout London.

Capital Studios: the London artists' studios development programme is pleased to announce the publication of important new research.

Commercial workspace provision for visual artists - a comparison with the affordable sector, researched and written by **Michael Cubey**, provides for the first time hard evidence of the difference between rental costs for artists' workspace in the commercial and the affordable studio sectors. The report presents research on commercially available studios in ten London boroughs and compares the findings with those for the same ten boroughs as surveyed in Acme's national studios survey (conducted in September 2004) for the affordable sector. The report also examines other factors, including availability, flexibility of terms and suitability for use by visual artists and makes comparisons between the two sectors.

Among the report's findings are:

- The average inclusive rent per square foot surveyed in the commercial sector was £22.38 compared with £7.49 in the affordable sector - a difference

of £14.89 per square foot, or 299 per cent

- The level of rental subsidy created at present by the affordable studio sector in London, compared to commercially available premises, is around £9.3 million per annum
- The value of business rate relief alone, achieved by the affordable studio sector, represents between £880,000 and £1.4 million per annum
- Revenue support for the affordable studio sector is £240,000 per annum

The report concludes that the affordable sector's provision of studios to visual artists creates a very significant subsidy to the visual arts sector and represents extremely good value for money.

Meet the researcher

Michael Cubey's knowledge of studio provision for artists comes from a 360 degree perspective: after working as an artist in a studio space in Cable Street Studios in 1994, he went on to manage and develop this single site artists' studio and gallery complex, which housed 150 studios and two exhibition spaces. Michael joined SPACE in 2000, becoming the Director of Property and Capital Development.

In November 2005, after leaving SPACE, Michael began working with Acme, researching commercial workspace provision for artists and the affordable sector. He is currently doing research for the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers and in May he joined studio providers ACAA

The feedback I've been getting is that the survey is already useful and shows that the studio sector not only provides much more affordable rents, but a significant subsidy to artists too.

Michael Cubey

where he will be working on a part-time basis.

Michael explains his involvement in studio provision, saying: "Art is central to my life and artists need space to work." He is motivated by his own experience of the sometimes unpredictable nature of the affordable studio sector: "The Cable Street Studios were on a vulnerable, short-term lease, which is a classic situation faced by studio providers – the studio community there was torn apart and much-needed studios were lost."

In 2005, Acme and Michael realised the need to research the commercial studio sector. Michael says: "Everyone uses anecdotal references for the difference between commercial and affordable studio providers, but we have never been able to confirm in a hard and fast way what that difference actually is. This research will be useful when it comes to talking to government and funding agencies, especially if we want the studio sector to be taken seriously."

In a bid to find out how much artists are expected to pay for a studio in the commercial sector and what the definition of 'affordable' really is, Michael devised a brief which took a panoramic snapshot of the ten London boroughs which have

the highest concentration of affordable studios. Michael then set about researching commercial workspace and affordable studio providers through the internet, over the phone and in local newspapers.

Michael says: "The basis of the study is finding out what artists pay when renting a commercial studio compared to the affordable sector. I 'mystery shopped' each studio myself, since it was the only way to get a true picture." One of the first surprises was how well the affordable sector sign-posts its studios compared with commercial agencies: "It was much easier to find information on affordable studios, but very difficult to find out what's around in the commercial sector."

He also realised that the affordable sector is much more up-front about costs, as well as using inclusive rents more: "Quite often, the commercial sector quotes a price which doesn't include service charges and business rates – which can be a determining factor in terms of whether a studio is affordable to artists in the long run."

Another important difference is the peer support artists gain when working in affordable studios alongside other artists. In commercial workspaces, artists work alongside a wide range of other, not always complementary, businesses, where there isn't the same informal availability of a network for artists.

Studios in the commercial sector are often decorated to a high specification, which is great for comfort, but an unnecessary additional cost for artists, and can also limit the scope of many artists' practices. Michael says: "In the

arts, it is said that the charitable sector has a lot to learn from the commercial sector, but in this instance, it's the other way round."

Michael's biggest challenge was making sense of the data – trying to compare like with like, in terms of size and type of space: "There was a lot of information to filter through, in order to present a clear picture and true comparison. It was crucial to avoid the mistake of comparing an affordable studio with a commercial office space."

Michael says that the most enjoyable part of the research has been the reaction from other studio providers: "The feedback I've been getting is that the survey is already useful and shows that the studio sector not only provides much more affordable rents, but a significant subsidy to artists too." This is good news for the public funding bodies that help organ-

isations like Acme – they know that they are getting value for money and that the subsidy is being passed on directly to artists.

Michael says: "This survey will help artists in the future by forming a bigger picture of the economic and social benefits which the affordable studio sector provides to artists and the wider community."

To find out more about this survey, log on to Acme's website: www.acme.org.uk – go to Supporting the Sector, Capital Studios

For further information on *Capital Studios* see Acme's website, or contact:

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E: val.millington@lineone.net

New trustee and new member of staff

We are delighted to welcome to Acme Studios artist Zarina Bhimji as a new member of our management committee and Pippa Gavaghan, as our first Communications Officer.

Zarina completed her studies at the Slade School of Fine Art in 1989 and has developed a distinguished career showing widely in the U.K. and internationally. Recently she exhibited in *50 years of Documenta*, Kassel, Germany, and *British Art Show 6*. She has been a recipient of numerous awards including The Paul Hamlyn Foundation Awards for Artists. She had an Acme studio at Copperfield Road from 1994 to 1999.

Before joining Acme Studios in January, Pippa provided communications support for department store retailers John Lewis and the YMCA. Over the last ten years, Pippa has worked for Arts Council England, LABAN and the Cultural Enterprise Office. In 2003 she gained a post graduate qualification in Journalism from London College of Communications and graduated in 1997 with an MPhil Arts research masters from Birmingham University.

ACME STUDIOS is a London-based charity that supports fine art practice by providing artists with affordable studio and living space. Acme was formed by artists in 1972 and is the largest organisation of its kind in the United Kingdom. It has helped over 5,000 artists with this fundamental means of support. Acme is recognised as the leading development agency for artists' working and living accommodation.

In 1997 Acme secured Lottery funding to enable it to buy and develop two of its studio buildings, The Fire Station in E14 and Copperfield Road in E3. Acme bought its third major studio building in Orsman Road, N1 in April 2000 and a fourth, a new-build block of 50 studios in Peckham, SE15, The Galleria Studios, was completed in June 2006.

These buildings represent a significant step in achieving our long-term goal of securing a permanent and sustainable network of affordable and accessible studios for artists in London.

Acme Studios:

- We provide over 400 studios in ten studio blocks throughout east and south-east London at inclusive rent levels of between £6.90 and £8.50 per sq.ft. per year.
- We provide six studios in Porthleven, Cornwall.

- We provide eight units of living accommodation.
- We provide a five-year work/live residency programme for 12 artists with and without disabilities at our fully accessible Fire Station building in Gillender Street, E14.
- We provide a five-year work/live residency programme for eight artists at The Sugar House in E15.
- We provide an Artist in Residence scheme working in partnership with the London Borough of Southwark and South London Gallery.
- We maintain a waiting list of artists seeking non-residential studios in London.
- We manage a major international residency programme for six foreign agencies from Australia, Germany, Sweden and Switzerland (3).
- We provide space for two important publicly-funded galleries: Matt's Gallery and The Showroom.
- We provide a nation-wide free advisory service to artists on all aspects of property negotiation, conversion and management.
- We work with other studio providers and Arts Council England to help develop the affordable studio sector nationally and publish a register of artists' studio groups and organisations in England.

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Supporting art & artists since 1972

Acme Studios consists of three exempt charities registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965:

Acme Studios Housing Association Limited

Reg. No: IP28377R
VAT Reg. No: 680 7763 03

Acme Artists Housing Association Limited

Reg. No: IP27215R

Acme Housing Association Limited

Reg. No: IP20468R

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