

Press release: For immediate publication

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## FIRST RECIPIENT OF JESSICA WILKES AWARD ANNOUNCED

**Acme Studios** is delighted to announce that **Howard Dyke** will be the first recipient of the Jessica Wilkes Award. This major professional development opportunity is the result of a legacy from the artist Jessica Wilkes who died in November 2005 at the age of 56. The award has been established by Acme and Jessica's family and friends to celebrate her life.

The annual award provides an artist with a free studio and grant to enable them to devote more of their time to their studio practice. The award, worth £10,000, is made to an artist selected from applications from current Acme studio tenants.

A panel, consisting of Joanna Hewison (Jessica's sister), Jock McFadyen (artist and close friend of Jessica's) and Jonathan Harvey, Co-Director, Acme Studios, selected Howard following studio visits to eight artists short-listed from a total of 40 applications.

The panel felt that the timing of the award was particularly important for Howard. In September last year he gave up regular employment to pursue his painting in a more focussed way. Spending as many hours as possible in his studio and reducing paid work to an absolute minimum is beginning to pay exciting dividends. Without this award he would not be able to sustain this intense and productive period of activity and soon financial pressures would force him back again into more regular employment.

Howard sees the award as: "a real kick start to my career and a massive confidence boost":

"Being the first recipient of the award will be of enormous benefit, as it will allow me the space, freedom, stability and consistency over the coming year to be more ambitious with my project. I also plan to organise a show in this time whilst developing my practice fully in the studio."

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Jonathan Harvey  
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Acme Studios is a group  
of three exempt charities  
registered under the  
Industrial and Provident  
Societies Act 1965

Members of the National  
Housing Federation

**Acme Studios Housing  
Association Limited**  
Reg No IP28377R  
**Acme Artists Housing  
Association Limited**  
Reg No IP27215R  
**Acme Housing  
Association Limited**  
Reg No IP20468R

Howard's studio is in Acme's Orsman Road building in Hackney. Over the course of the year Acme will work closely with him to promote his work and the results of his year's studio activity.

Howard graduated from Central Saint Martins in 1993 and then undertook a part-time MA at Goldsmiths College from 1999-2002. He has been in a number of group shows, last year co-curating *The Juddykes* held at John Jones in Finsbury Park, London.

Talking about his work he says: "I use photographs and found images, which I re-work through drawing and then translate into highly charged gestural paintings. Each image is chosen for its desire to celebrate painting's history and also its possibilities now and into the future.

I want to understand my subject through the languages of colour and expressive mark making. My subjects are unanimous in their desire to be noticed, taken seriously then revealed. The series of Burka's, Hijab's and Niqab's I am working on at the moment embody the lost motifs from abstract expressionism, colour field painting combined with Eastern decorative arts and calligraphy."

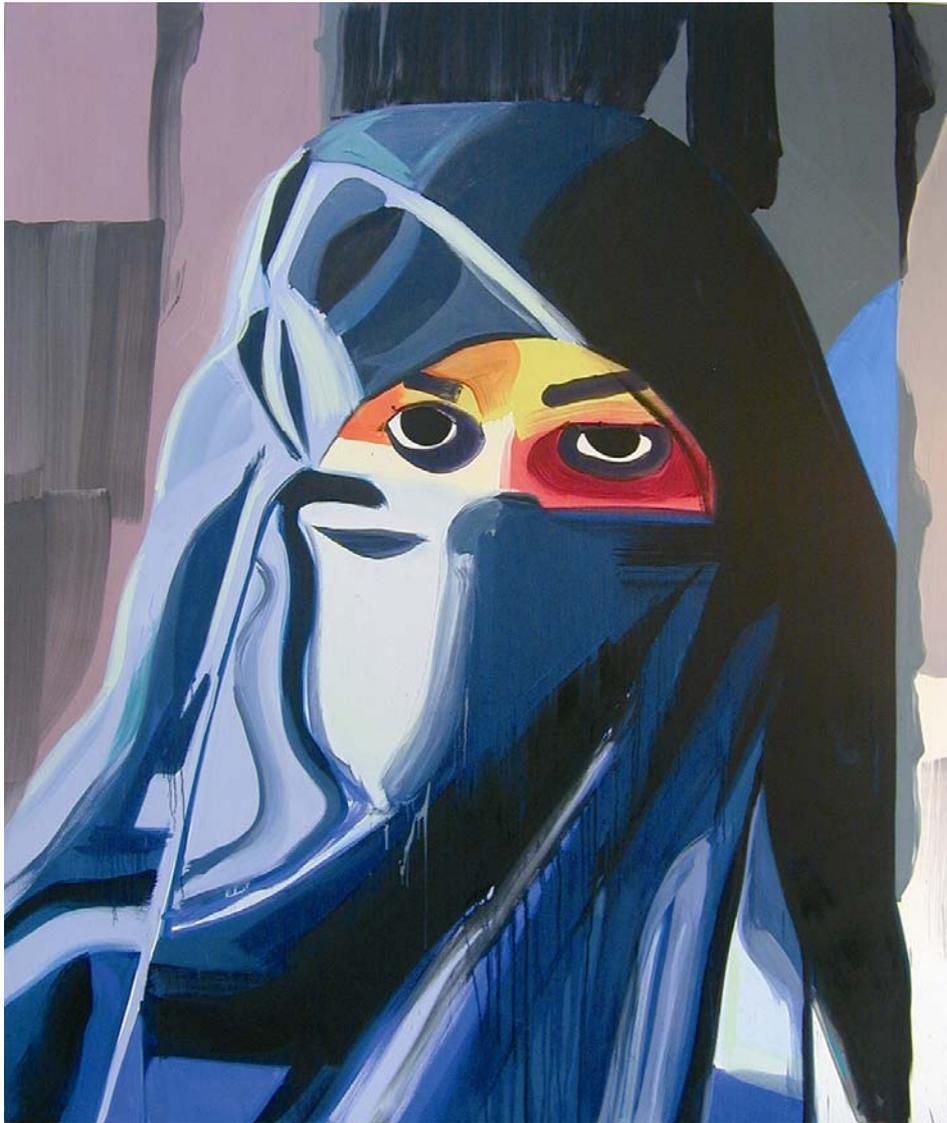
We look forward to working with Howard over the coming year and hope that this new award will be a fitting memorial and a celebration of Jessica's life, her work and her generosity. Working closely with her family and friends we have established the award in a way which we hope will maximise its impact and financial value. Acme's work is dedicated to supporting artists who cannot afford to rent studio and living space on the open market and this award helps to extend the value of what we do.

### **Notes to Editors:**

**Acme Studios** provides studios, work/live space, residencies and awards for artists in economic need and is the UK's leading development agency for artists' space.

**Jessica Wilkes** had been the tenant of an Acme short-life house in Southwark for a number of years. In the 80s she, like many other Acme tenants, had the opportunity to buy her house at a discounted price and as a result was able, with this secure base, to focus on her work as a painter.

Jessica was a fine art student at Newcastle University and moved to London in 1975 where she completed an MA in Painting at Chelsea School of Art. She exhibited her paintings extensively throughout her professional life and established strong connections with the Bermondsey Artists' Group and with Byam Shaw School of Art, where she taught. She also had a long term involvement with the Youth Services and was instrumental in supporting other studio groups



Akilah – Last of The Expressionists. 2008  
Oil on canvas. 260 x 213cm



Howard Dyke in his Acme studio at Orsman Road, London N1.

### **Press Information**

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