



JONATHAN HARVEY OBE
1949-2023

"I've always felt that Acme is doing its job when the artists who are in our studios and houses don't have to think about how those studios or houses are run or managed. Because I believe very strongly that what the artists need to think about, and want to think about, is developing their work and I think it's a measure of success when we don't have to have a conversation with artists about how we're managing their property. We should be taking care of that and they shouldn't have to think about that."

Jonathan Harvey OBE

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of our Co-Founder and former Chief Executive, Jonathan Harvey OBE, on 4 September 2023 at the age of 74.

A staunch advocate for helping artists be artists, Jonathan's unwavering belief in the fundamental importance of support at the level of production was integral in shaping Acme's trajectory over the past 50 years and, most importantly, affordable studio provision in London and beyond.

Jonathan always put the individual artist first. He believed that by virtue of supporting and trusting them, artists would create things and relationships "that you could not have imagined, and you could not prescribe." His trust in artists and conviction that Acme had a responsibility not to demand anything of them informs our work to this day, as we continue to respond to the

challenges of creating affordable workspace in London.

Having founded Acme with David Panton in 1972, Jonathan's impact in making Acme a self-supporting organisation remains evident across our projects and activities. His belief in the importance of permanency, security and longevity are still key tenets of Acme's organisational ethos as we look beyond our 50th anniversary.

For many years at Acme's helm, Jonathan and David continued to explore and exploit new ways of securing affordable space for artists, from short-life houses to recycling 'dinosaurs' - redundant commercial and industrial buildings, often on an extremely large scale. They utilised everything from a church to a meat pie factory, a hotel to a foundry, a Cornish net loft, an abattoir, and a fridge.

With permanency the only way to secure affordable space for artists in the long term, Jonathan led two successful National Lottery bids in 1997 and 2005, enabling Acme's purchase of two buildings and, consequently, to finance and purchase a third. Jonathan and David's advocacy resulted in increasing governmental recognition of the worth of artist communities, reflected in a newfound desire for commercial developers to embed affordable workspace within newbuild residential developments, with spectacular results.

Jonathan co-founded and ran the Acme Gallery (1976-81) in Covent Garden, an independent exhibition space which established a significant reputation for its uncompromising approach to the presentation of installation and performance work, including seminal shows by Anne Bean, Stuart Brisley and Stephen Cripps.

His vision for the gallery as an artist-centred extension of Acme's work as a housing association was "utterly consistent with our role as being a service organisation for artists." Under Jonathan's leadership, the space provided a blank canvas for artists to work through their ideas in a public setting, displaying the work "in a way that created as direct a confrontation as possible between the public and the artist, without interpreting it."

Jonathan led on the pioneering Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) between Acme and Central Saint Martins, the first of its kind awarded with a specific focus on the visual arts.

This resulted in the Associate Studio Programme in collaboration with Central Saint Martins and Double Agents, a new studio building built to Acme specifications, High House studios (2013), and the *Studios for Artists: Concepts and Concrete* publication (2015), edited by Jonathan alongside Graham Ellard.

Jonathan's immeasurable contributions to the provision of affordable studio space for artists have been celebrated by Acme with the Jonathan Harvey Studio Award (2016-2019) for early

career artists and, more recently, the ongoing Jonathan Harvey Tenant Award (2022-). Currently in its second edition, the award recognises Acme artist tenants who have made a long-term commitment to their arts practice.

Jonathan's expertise was wide ranging and much sought after. Alongside his work with Acme, in 1977 Jonathan co-founded TSW-Television South West, the new ITV franchise holder for the south west of England (1982-92). Working as their Arts Consultant and as an associate producer on arts and experimental programmes on Channel 4, Jonathan helped form and service TSW's Advisory Board, advised on the company's arts sponsorship policy and oversaw sponsored projects. He also co-curated two pioneering international site-specific public art projects: the UK-wide TSWA 3D (1987) and TSW's Four Cities Projects (1990). Working with Tony Foster and James Lingwood, he continued his collaborations with artists, extending the concept of installation beyond the gallery.

In 1993, Jonathan took up the chairmanship of the board of trustees of the Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol. One of Europe's leading centres for the contemporary arts with an international reputation for presenting new and innovative work, Jonathan oversaw the organisation's major refurbishment and extension that we see today. In 2000, Jonathan was called upon to join the independent review board to assess the feasibility of the proposed development of the new Tate Modern.

Jonathan also worked to create a national body to represent the interests of affordable studio providers in England, playing a key role in establishing the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers in 2006 as a founding trustee and Treasurer.

Jonathan served on various committees, including the Arts Council's Artists' Film Committee and Advisory Panel on Art, GLAA's Visual Arts Panel and the Council of Management of ABSA. He chaired the Visual Arts Panel of South West Arts from 1985 to 1988 and undertook a number of consultancies as part of Acme's advisory service and a number of assessments for lottery capital projects on behalf of Arts Council England.

Both Jonathan and David were appointed Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the New Year's 2014 Honours List for services to the arts, and Jonathan was made an Honorary Fellow of University of the Arts London (UAL) in 2016.

Jonathan was born in Plymouth on 15 April 1949 to Raymond Vigurs Harvey, a bank manager, and Ailsa Morley Harvey, née Rae. He was the third son, with two elder brothers and one younger sister. Jonathan grew up in Modbury in the South Hams of Devon and attended Modbury primary school before going on to Plymouth College.

The family moved to Brockenhurst in Hampshire when Jonathan was 14 and he attended

Brockenhurst Grammar school. Jonathan was a keen golfer and at one time Junior Champion at Bigbury Golf Club. He went on to study art at Reading University, where he was tutored by Tom Cross and graduated in 1971, then went to Chelsea School of Art as a postgraduate, where he was tutored by Ian Stevenson. Jonathan also attended City University to study Arts Administration from 1974-75.

Jonathan moved to East London in 1971 and first lived in Bow, moving south of the river to Bermondsey in 1979. He continued to practice as an artist until 1975, both as a painter and as a member of *Bernsteins*, the performance group of seven artists including the Kipper Kids and Anne Bean.

After retiring from Acme in 2016, Jonathan moved to Halesworth, Suffolk, and is survived by his partner Lesley.

Jonathan will be having a private funeral, with family and a handful of close friends. Acme will be honouring Jonathan's legacy as part of our upcoming event to mark our 50th anniversary in London on 9 November 2023.



“Through it all, we can remember Jonathan’s lovely humour, his quiet wit (the slight raise of an eyebrow and a low chuckle), his love of cricket, and of good living. Jonathan’s saving grace was his streak of the devil. Nicely spoken, wearing a nice suit and with nice manners and a heart of steel, coupled with dogged persistence. But above all, his fierce recognition and championing of the importance of supporting artists to be artists. We miss him. He will be missed.”

David Panton OBE and friends