

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF ARTISTS' STUDIOS

CHILDERS STREET STUDIOS



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UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF ARTISTS' STUDIOS

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Research and authorship:

Bartlett School of Planning, University College London
Dr Jessica Ferm, Principal Investigator and Project Co-ordinator
Dr Pablo Sendra, Co-Investigator
Dr Juliana Martins, Co-Investigator
Irene Manzini Ceinar, Researcher
Elisabeta Ilie, Researcher

Client team:

Dr Frances Hatherley, Project Lead, Acme Studios
Lea O'Loughlin, Co-Director, Acme Studios
Richard Kingsnorth, Co-Director, Acme Studios

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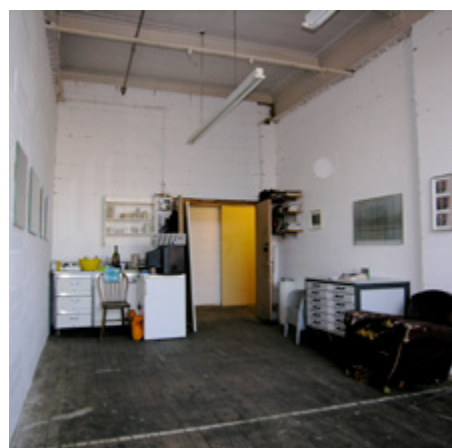
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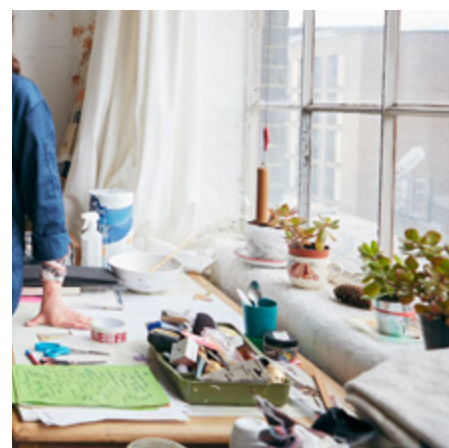
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The data for this study is based on fieldwork and data collected by UCL Bartlett School of Planning between September and December 2021. The study is part of a wider collaboration between Acme Artists Studios and UCL, facilitated by UCL Innovation and Enterprise. The project has UCL ethical approval [Project ID 14267/002]

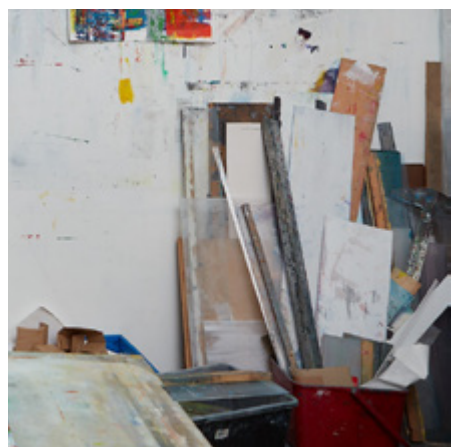
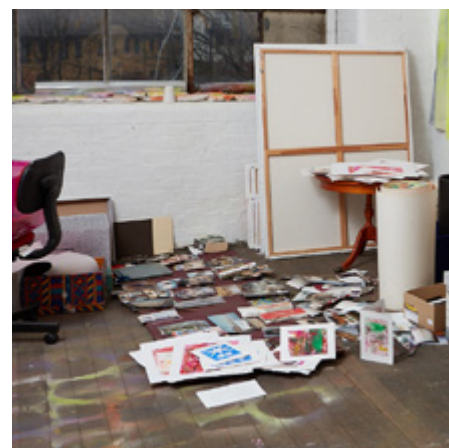
With thanks to artists from Acme Childers Street Studios, who gave their time to contribute to interviews for this report.



UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF ARTISTS' STUDIOS



Childers Street Studios



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the single largest provider of permanent affordable artist studios in England, operating since 1972, Acme Artist Studios (Acme) commissioned researchers from the Bartlett School of Planning, UCL, to further explore the concept of the ‘value’ of artists’ studios. Despite the known contribution of artists to London’s reputation as a great cultural capital, artist studio providers are struggling to retain and secure affordable studio space in the long-term. Part of the problem is that artist studios tend to be considered, in policy terms, under the umbrella of creative workspaces, with value normally expressed in monetary terms. The broader value of artists and artists’ workspaces more specifically is less well understood.

Overall approach

This pilot project focuses on one of Acme’s studio buildings, Childers Street - in southeast London - which has been occupied as artists’ studios for the past three decades and offers a rich source of insight.

The study seeks to provide insight into how long-term, secure and affordable artist studios bring value to artists and the community they are part of. It sets out to develop a novel, grounded notion of the various aspects of value, centred on artists’ lived experiences. Based on a literature review, a value-based framework was developed to inform the questioning in 21 semi-structured interviews with artists at Childers Street, and provide a framework from which to interpret and conceptualise the findings.

Value framework

In this research framework the notion of value is multidimensional - social, economic, spatial, symbolic, psychological, educational - and generated at different scales (the studio, the neighbourhood, the city).

There is an appreciation that value may be perceived and experienced differently, and that the diversity of artists (in terms of e.g. gender, stage in career, type of work, etc.) should be considered. Value is subjective, rather than objective, and the starting point to uncover it is the lived experiences, perceptions and views of artists themselves.

Content of the report

The report includes the following sections:

- An introduction - providing context, an overview of the study’s aims and objectives, and an explanation of the methodology
- An explanation of the changing context and pressures in London, affecting artists’ studios
- An overview of existing academic and professional literature on affordable studios, workspace and the various dimensions of value
- A description of the Childers Street Studios case study
- The findings of the report, which are derived from an analysis of the interview data collected
- Conclusions and Recommendations

Key findings

These four key findings are based on a literature review and qualitative interviews with 21 artists based in Childers Street Studios in Deptford, London. The findings are written in full in the main section of the report.

- 1** The physical qualities of the studio space are fundamental for artistic practice
- 2** Having a studio, managed by a provider and located away from home, provides stability to produce art work and reduces financial and psychological stress
- 3** The studio space is central to the artist’s sense of identity and well-being
- 4** The long-term security of artists’ studios enables artists to become embedded in their locales, providing circular benefits for communities and artists

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are eight recommendations summarised below, which emerge from the findings and conclusions, in order to inform advocacy, policy decisions and planning.

1. An understanding of value in the built environment needs to be broader than economic value and informed by the lived experiences of actors and users.
2. Recognise the holistic benefits of workspace for artists.
3. The value of artists' studios, and of supporting artists, needs to be seen as distinct from the value of creative workspace, or creative industries more broadly.
4. Value artists' studios as places of work and the contribution of artists in terms of the work they produce.
5. The GLA and boroughs should be mindful, when developing their policies, of the continued need for long-term, secure studio provision for artists.
6. Where funds are allocated to support workspace initiatives, or other support for creative industries, a portion of these funds should be allocated specifically for artists, and there should be a monitoring of the impact on artists' studios as a separate category.
7. Boroughs need to be more proactive in facilitating partnerships between developers and artists workspace providers, and boroughs' affordable workspace policies need to be more mindful of the specific requirements of artists' studios.
8. There is a need for further research, lobbying and advocacy work, and to provide better support for smaller, less established artists studio providers.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The contribution of artists to London's reputation as one of the 'great cultural capitals of the world'¹ is widely acknowledged. Artistic production is part of the creative industries sector, which is estimated to contribute £47 billion to London's economy², and which grew by 40% between 2009 and 2014³. Yet, London's inequalities and the rising cost of property is seen as a threat to London's ongoing global cultural status⁴. Artists' studio providers have long been critical in providing secure, affordable studio spaces for artists. Yet, their work continues to be threatened by rising property values and competition between land uses⁵, as well as competing policy priorities - particularly affordable housing – which have made it more difficult to retain and secure long-term affordable studios in the capital.

As the single largest provider of affordable artist studios in England, operating since 1972, Acme Artist Studios (hereafter Acme) has commissioned this study to further explore the concept of the 'value' of artists' studios. Across 2020, Acme supported over 800 individual artist tenants and a further 31 artists through its residencies and awards programmes across 16 buildings in Greater

London. The project focuses on one of Acme's studio buildings, Childers Street, which has been occupied as artists' studios for the past three decades and offers a rich source of insight.

To date, the value of creative industries has tended to be expressed in monetary terms, as economic value measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), employment and productivity⁶. Understanding the value of creative workspaces has also taken a top-down objective approach and has included a broad range of types of spaces, including for coworking, incubators and meanwhile spaces⁷. The value of artists and artists' workspaces more specifically is less well understood.

Argument

The report makes a case for greater policy priority, investment and intervention in London's artists' studios, arguing that, despite a policy focus on creative and cultural industries, the value of artists and the particular challenges and requirements of artists' studio providers in ensuring the long-term sustainability of studios in the capital, have not been adequately acknowledged.

1 Mayor of London, 2014, p.35

2 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/cultural-infrastructure-toolbox/research-and-guidance/why-does-london-need-cultural-infrastructure#acc-i-56150>

3 Togni, 2015

4 Mayor of London, 2018

5 We Made That, 2014 and 2018

6 Togni, 2015

7 Roberts, 2016

ARTISTS' STUDIOS IN LONDON: CHANGING CONTEXT AND PRESSURES

Study aims

This study seeks to develop a grounded assessment of value from the artists' perspective. Specifically, it aims to:

- Provide insight into how long-term, secure and affordable artist studios bring value to artists and their surrounding community;
- Develop a novel, grounded notion of the various aspects of value, centred on artists' lived experiences, which can inform a new evaluation methodology or toolkit;
- Inform advocacy, policy decisions, and planning.



Methodology

In an article on arts-led regeneration, Loretta Lees and Claire Melhuish⁸ have argued that future approaches to estimate value should move beyond statistical counts of economic value, drawing on ethnographic methods that both observe artists in situ and make use of the artists themselves, reflecting on their practices.

The study responds to this challenge, bringing together the following research methods:

- **A review of previous literature**, focusing on the meaning of value, and previous studies on the value of artists and artists' workspaces or studios. The objective of the initial review was to identify gaps in knowledge, and to develop a holistic understanding of value that can be applied to the context of artists' studios.
- **Site-based participant observation**, including a review of the use of the building.
- **21 in-depth interviews** (of between 30-60 minutes) with artists engaged in day-to-day practice on site in Childers Street Studios.

8 Lees and Melhuish, 2015

The pressures

The vulnerability of artists' studios in the face of rising property values and gentrification pressures in London's competitive land market are well known⁹. Artists' studios, historically occupying industrial buildings in up-and-coming areas of London, have been the target for developer-led refurbishment or redevelopment for more competitive land uses, such as housing, or even higher-value creative industries (such as architects' offices, media firms). These property-led pressures have been exacerbated by:

- the pressure local Councils face to deliver housing against ever-increasing regionally set targets¹⁰;
- ongoing deregulation of national planning policy, which has extended the range of permitted development (development that can take place without the need for planning permission), facilitating the conversion of both office and light industrial premises to residential¹¹; and
- funding pressures on local Councils, exacerbated since 2010 under the Government's austerity programme¹².

9 We Made That, 2014

10 Ferm and Jones, 2016

11 Clifford et al, 2020

12 Mayor of London, 2019

Survival strategies

Over the years, Acme has developed a range of strategies to mitigate the impact of redevelopment and displacement pressures. One particular focus has been on partnership arrangements with developers to secure affordable workspace provision in new mixed-use residential developments through developer agreements^{13,14}. However, Acme is finding this model is now less viable due to competing demands for the same pot of money for the delivery of affordable housing and other social infrastructure. There is also competition from other occupiers of affordable workspace delivered through developer agreements, particularly coworking spaces. These tend to provide more jobs - which meet the Councils' employment policy objectives - and can market themselves to developers as cleaner and quieter than artists, and therefore more compatible with housing. Despite this competition, Acme has successfully partnered with developers in numerous mixed use schemes, and the presence of artists tends to become a selling point.

Affordability

The definition of affordable workspace is contested. In policy terms, workspace can be defined as affordable as long as it is a certain percentage below market rate, this is beyond the means of most artists. Acme commits to ensuring that its workspaces are affordable in relation to artists' means, rather

13 Ferm, 2014

14 MHCLG, 2020

than measuring affordability in relation to market rentals. This means that their business model relies on securing long-term leases on rental agreements that are substantially below what the market would command. However, developers report that this rarely affects the financial viability of the whole development, due to the value uplift on residential that the presence of artists' brings¹⁵.

Studios at risk

A latest annual data report for the Greater London Authority on artists' workspace¹⁶ found that artist studio buildings continue to be at high risk of closure, but new sites coming forward mean there was a net gain of 13 sites between 2014 and 2017. On the other hand, many operators provide space for both artists and other creative tenants to support a blended rental income model – which means not every new site provides workspace exclusively for artists.

Only 13% of operators own the freehold of their property, exposing the majority to uncertain futures. Workspaces are becoming more expensive, and increasingly less affordable for artists who pay on average £13.60psf inclusive rent for an Acme studio, compared to between £38-50psf for commercial studios in London¹⁷.

Yet demand remains high and stable¹⁸.

15 Ferm, 2014

16 We Made That, 2018

17 Acme studios are inclusive of business rates, insurance and service charges. Typical commercial studio prices (exc business rates) are sourced from Workspace Group (<https://www.workspace.co.uk/workspaces/commercial-studios-to-rent-london>)

18 The median studio size is 325sq ft and the median rent is £355.33pcm (The mean is 405 sq ft /

Mayoral initiatives

These challenges are reflected in the priorities of the Mayor of London's Cultural Infrastructure Plan¹⁹, which sets out a range of actions to both protect existing infrastructure, including workspaces, and initiatives to secure new workspace, acknowledging the need for long-term sustainability. Initiatives include the establishment, in 2019, of an independent Creative Land Trust – supporting workspace providers to secure long leases – and the introduction of Creative Enterprise Zones in 2018, within which Councils are encouraged to promote new spaces, and involve communities and creative practitioners in local plan policies that support artists and creatives. These initiatives are in addition to the broader policies on affordable workspace in the London Plan²⁰, and the Good Growth Fund, a £70m regeneration programme which also includes support for creating and securing new artists' workspace.

£459.07 pcm as there are some large studios)

19 Mayor of London, 2019

20 Policy E3 of the London Plan (GLA, 2021) states that 'planning obligations may be used to secure affordable workspace (in the B Use Class) at rents maintained below the market rate for that space for a specific social, cultural or economic development purpose'. The policy refers specifically to 'creative and artists' workspace'.

Ongoing challenges

The workspace model pursued by Acme, and similar artists' studio providers, relies on providing long-term, secure affordable studio spaces to artists, and Acme is increasingly looking to secure whole studio buildings – alongside floorspace within mixed use developments – where there is a critical mass of artist tenants and where there are opportunities for greater cost efficiencies.

Despite the inclusion of artists and artists' studios in London Plan planning policy and funding available through the Mayor of London²¹, the sector is so far struggling to benefit substantially from policy and funding available, due to conflation with creative industries and creative workspace and competition from occupiers that are often seen to provide greater economic benefit. Whether or not these limitations will continue to affect provision delivered through the Creative Enterprise Zones and Creative Land Trust is, as yet, unclear. No formal public evaluation has yet been undertaken.

21 In the first two rounds of the Good Growth Fund, less than £1m of the £54m awarded was allocated to artists workspace projects.

This study has therefore been undertaken in order to better understand the value of artists' studios – as opposed to workspace for creative industries more broadly - and more specifically the long-term, secure affordable studio model that artists' workspace providers have long pursued. Before exploring the perception of value specifically from the artists' perspective - drawing on the interviews with artists at Childers Street Studios - the next section reviews what we already know about the value of artists' studios from the literature.



UNDERSTANDING VALUE

Over the last few decades, greater attention has been paid to social, public, or civic value, “that is, the value that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, social ventures, and social programs create”²². In the UK, maximising social value in public sector procurement is a statutory requirement defined in the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013.

Broadly, social value can be understood as the wider impact of programmes across social, economic and environmental concerns, with these benefits often occurring in combination²³. Several models have been developed to understand and measure the social value of places and the built environment. Examples include the *Social Value Toolkit for Architecture*²⁴ and the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment’s *Value Handbook*²⁵, which provide a rich framework identifying numerous types of value associated with the built environment (i.e. exchange, use, image, social, environmental, cultural). Useful work examining and conceptualising the social value of High Streets, undertaken for the GLA, encourages us to consider the value of High Streets in terms of the dimensions of prosperity, people and place²⁶.

While there is a consensus regarding the importance of accounting for social value, there are multiple definitions of the term and many competing methods for calculating social value, in

different fields²⁷. Importantly, the Act encourages the development of organisations’ own definitions of social value²⁸. As summarized by Mulgan et al²⁹, “this field is more of a craft than a science”. They add that “value will mean different things to different groups” which “highlights the need to move beyond single measures of value and to see the exploration of value more as a process of uncovering”³⁰.

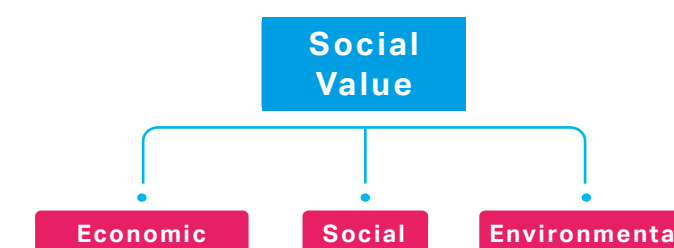


Figure 01: Social Value diagram (We Made That and LSE Cities, 2017)

22 Mulgan, 2010, p. 38
 23 We Made That and LSE Cities, 2017
 24 Samuel et al., 2020
 25 Macmillan, 2006
 26 We Made That and LSE Cities, 2017

27 Mulgan, 2010
 28 Mulgan et al., 2019
 29 Mulgan, 2010, p. 5
 30 Mulgan et al, 2019, p.40

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THE VALUE OF ARTISTS' STUDIOS

This section reviews existing work on the value of affordable workspaces, and artists' studios in particular, which has provided a framework for the empirical study. It considers the value of the studio to the artist, and to the wider community.

The value of the studio to the artists

The literature reveals that the studio is a crucial resource for artists' practice and livelihoods, providing multiple dimensions of value to the artist: spatial, psychological/emotional, symbolic, material/economic and social.

- **Spatial value:** The studio is a crucial resource for artists' practice and livelihoods, across multiple dimensions. The studio is a space where artists can work and pursue their artistic vision, supporting individual creativity, knowledge production, exploration, and reflection³¹. It further affords artistic production as storage of material, equipment or artwork³², and exhibition space. The studio's spatial conditions are important to support the practices and needs of artistic production. Key factors include high ceilings, large wall and floor space, good natural light³³, flexibility, affordability³⁴, and sustainability of access³⁵.
- **Psychological/emotional value:** The studio can also be understood as a psychological

space providing what can be called emotional value. Sjöholm³⁶ notes that the familiarity of the studio space gives artists confidence and emotional security. Research undertaken by Acme³⁷ during the pandemic reinforces the studio's psychological importance allowing artists to "work through their anxieties and fears" and some reported feeling "they were held and sustained by their studios".

- **Symbolic value:** The studio is key to strengthening artists' reputation and prestige and validating their identity. Bain ³⁸argues that the lack of recognition of artistic labour as 'real work' leads artists to deliberately construct and project an artistic identity, with space playing a key role in this process³⁹.
- **Material / economic value:** The importance of affordability of studio provision to the artist is widely acknowledged. It creates the conditions for artists to pursue their practice, when they often face precarity of income, with many having other jobs to support their living⁴⁰. The broader facilities provided by the studio provider are also of material value to the artist, including professional development, and access to shared facilities, broadband and equipment opportunities⁴¹.
- **Social value:** The artist's studio, situated within a building where other artists are working,

managed by an artists' studio provider, provides social value to the artist by promoting social networking opportunities and facilitating synergies between artists⁴². A study on the value of open workspaces (more generally) found that these spaces support social contact by facilitating encounters in shared spaces, and being 'curated communities'⁴³. The extent to which these synergies are experienced (and how these are facilitated) in artists' studios is, however, under-explored.

The studio can be understood as the heart of a network of spaces (including housing, social spaces, etc.) that support artists' practice and livelihoods. Importantly, it plays a role in allowing artists to be based and work in particular neighbourhoods. As Lloyd⁴⁴ argued, some neighbourhoods provide material and symbolic resources that support creative activity, including access to employment opportunities, appropriate spaces for work, display, and living, but also emotional support, access to social networks, opportunities for exposure - all important for building artists' reputation and identity.

The broader value of artists' studios

In parallel, there is a growing recognition that artists and artists' studios, bring value to the communities and cities in which they are located. There are multiple dimensions to value in this context

including: economic, cultural, placemaking, social and educational.

- **Economic value:** In 2016, a report on the value of 'open workspaces' (including workspace for small businesses, start-ups, incubators and artists) for the GLA⁴⁵, discussed the issues of attempting to quantify the economic value of open workspaces, using measures such as turnover, number of jobs created, or business start-up rates. These measures are anyway not particularly relevant to the work of artists and the contribution of artists' studios, where economic value needs to be more closely tied to the specific sphere of arts and culture. Artists underpin the creative economy, which contributes a total of £47 billion to London's economy⁴⁶ although the distinct contribution of artists to the economic success of this sector needs to be better understood⁴⁷. In addition, the economic value of accommodating artists' workspace in cities can be more indirect. For example, artists contribute to the life of the city, thereby helping other firms attract highly skilled workers⁴⁸, as well as generating work for others who supply or distribute their work, producing innovations, or providing a pool of

31 Sjöholm, 2013
32 Acme, 2021 (studio practice part two)
33 Lloyd, 2004
34 Loftus, 2015
35 Gadwa, 2010

36 Sjöholm 2013
37 Acme, 2021, p.9
38 Bain 2005
39 Bain 2005
40 Roberts, 2016; We Made That, 2014
41 NFASP, 2010

42 Gadwa 2010
43 Roberts, 2016
44 Lloyd, 2004

45 Roberts, 2016
46 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/cultural-infrastructure-toolbox/research-and-guidance/why-does-london-need-cultural-infrastructure#acc-i-56150>
47 Markusen and King, 2003
48 Such claims were central to Richard Florida's (2002) thesis in *The Rise of the Creative Class*, which argues that firms follow workers rather than vice-versa, but has since been the subject of much debate.

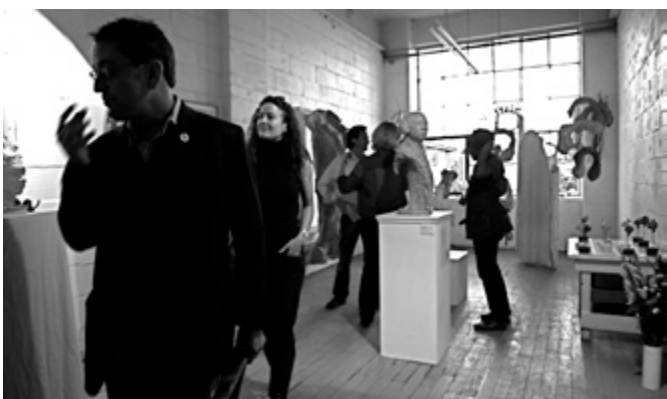
talent available for firms' design and marketing operations⁴⁹. At the neighbourhood scale, artists and visitors to the studios boost demand for local businesses and services⁵⁰, and the presence of artists can foster local business growth and attract inward investment to an area⁵¹, although the empirical evidence for the contribution of artists to regeneration at the neighbourhood scale is contested⁵².

- **Cultural value:** There is a recognition that without affordable artists' studio provision, London would struggle to retain the artistic talent that is underpins its status as one of the most culturally rich cities in the world. The precarious economic position of most artists, particularly those who create non-commercial work, means that living and working in London is difficult without some form of subsidy. As such, open workspaces / studios "enable artists to stay and produce work in the capital" which is important for London's global reputation⁵³.
- **Placemaking value:** Existing research literature tends to characterise artists' studios as occupying former warehouse or industrial buildings, often vacant or dilapidated before they are brought into use as studios⁵⁴. According to this narrative, the rehabilitation of (sometimes historic) buildings enhances the

physical environment in an area, whereas the presence of artists and visitors to the studios increases pedestrian activity and provides custom to the area's shops, cafes and services. The presence of artists and creative workers can increase the desirability of a neighbourhood, with developers often seeking artists' studio providers or other workspace providers as anchor tenants in their developments. The existence of artists and their studios in a neighbourhood therefore provide a form of 'placemaking value'⁵⁵. Yet, these very benefits can create tensions too. Artists have at the same time been identified as the initiators of gentrification: as 'urban pioneers', they represent the first step in a process that may ultimately displace themselves and other low income groups. As such the presence of artists has been both romanticized and politicized⁵⁶.

- **Social/educational value:** The provision of artists' studios can generate social value through, for example, the organisation of events such as open studios, educational or outreach programmes, and public art projects with potential impacts in fostering creativity and addressing "social exclusion, offender, health and learning issues"⁵⁷. Other positive social impacts include promotion of civic involvement, increased safety, and providing new spaces to the public⁵⁸.

However, Lees and Melhuish ⁵⁹argue that care needs to be taken in any claims of "arts-led regeneration as a tool to combat social exclusion", which emerged as a "quasi-social fact" under New Labour in the early 2000s, but is supported by a "limited and problematic evidence base". They argue that, to better understand the role of art in urban regeneration and social exclusion, research needs to make use of the artists themselves, who are on the 'front line', and the local community. This research goes some way to pursuing such an approach.



49 Markusen and King, 2003
50 Gadwa, 2010
51 Creative United 2016
52 Lees and Melhuish, 2015
53 Roberts, 2016, p.26
54 For example, see Harris, 2011

55 Roberts, 2016; Metris Arts Consulting, 2010
56 Bain, 2003 (citing Cole, 1987)
57 NFASP, 2010
58 Gadwa, 2010

59 Lees and Melhuish, 2015, p.242

Towards a grounded notion of value

This study sets out to develop a novel, grounded notion of the various aspects of value, centred on artists' lived experiences.

The literature review has identified a wide range of multi-dimensional values associated with the provision of artists' studios at different scales, summarised in Figure 02. These were used to inform the questioning in the semi-structured interviews, and to provide a framework from which to interpret and conceptualise the findings.

Our empirical research seeks to further ground these notions of value. There is an appreciation that value may be perceived and experienced differently, and that the diversity of artists (in terms of e.g. gender, stage in career, type of work, etc.) should be considered. Value is subjective, rather than objective, and the starting point to uncover it will be the lived experiences, perceptions and views of artists themselves.

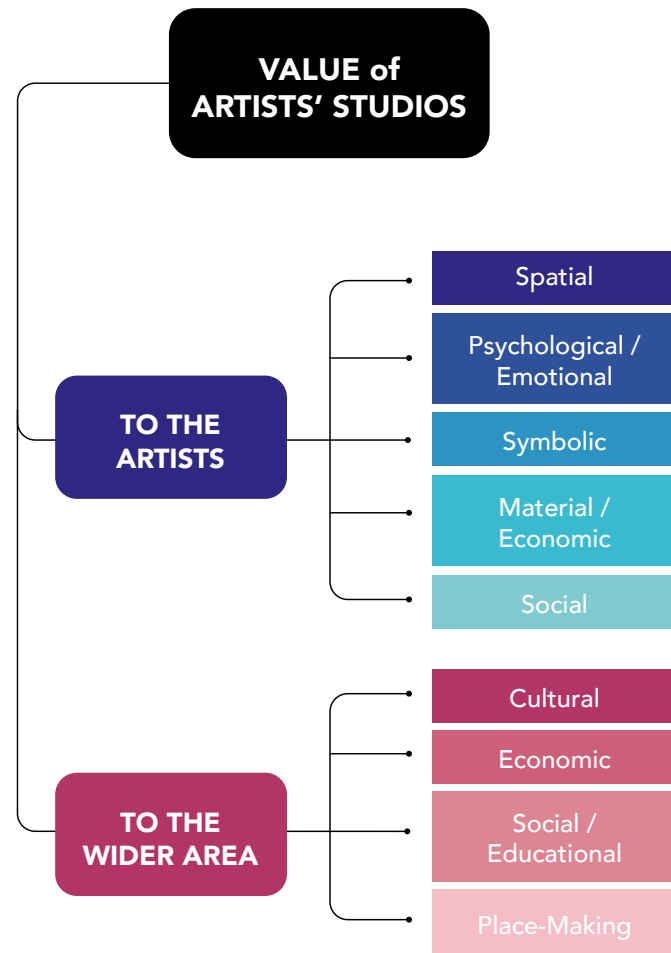


Figure 02: Diagram showing the multi-dimensional values attributed to artists' studios, drawn from the literature review

CHILDERS STREET STUDIOS

Childers Street studios is within a 1920s building over four floors that was a former ship propeller foundry, and later railway carriage maintenance sheds. It is situated in Deptford, in the borough of Lewisham, southeast London - a thriving hub of cultural and creative activity which was key to its successful bid to become the London Borough of Culture 2022.

The brick building, which is sandwiched between a railway viaduct and a residential area, was turned into **132 studios** by Acme, over four phases starting in 1990, with support from London

Borough of Lewisham, Greater London Arts⁶⁰, The Henry Moore Foundation⁶¹ and The Paul Hamlyn Foundation⁶².

Today, the building hosts:

- **112 self-contained studios**
- **20 partitioned studios**

Situated over four floors, ranging from 180ft² to 1,800ft² (17m² to 167m²). Rents range from £13.26 to £14.81psf per annum.

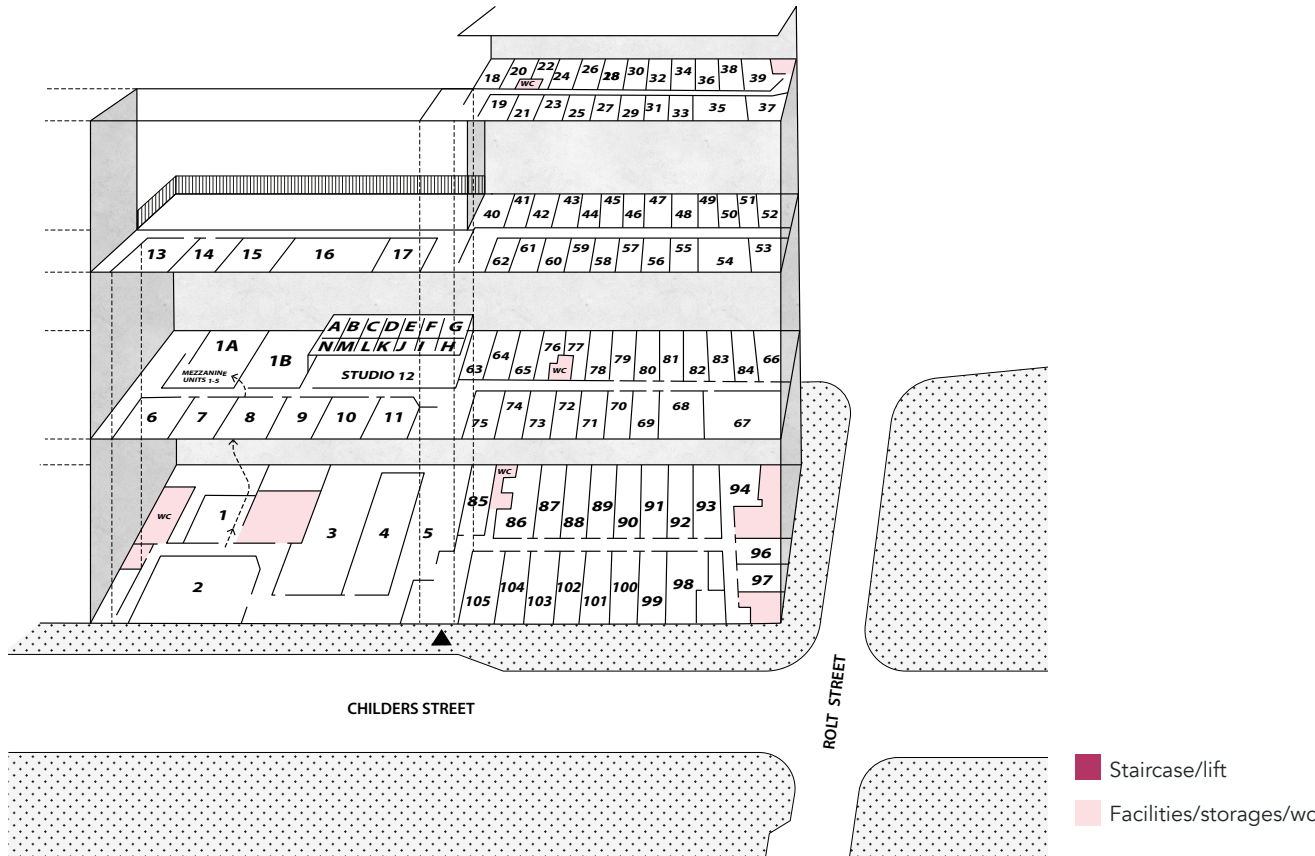


Figure 03: 3D representation of Childers Street Studios

⁶⁰ <https://theartsociety.org/greater-london-area>

⁶¹ <https://www.henry-moore.org/>

⁶² <https://www.phf.org.uk/>



FINDINGS: ARTISTS' PERSPECTIVES

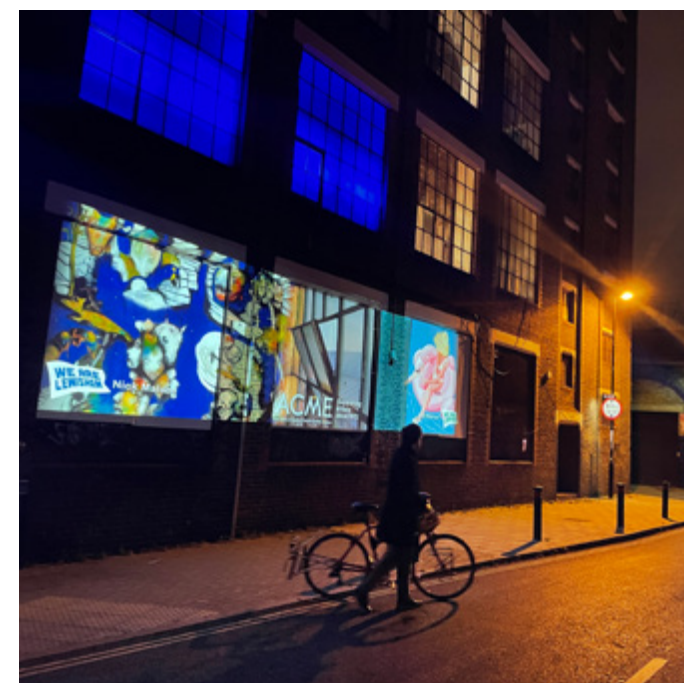
The findings of the present research suggest that the different dimensions of value of providing affordable artist studio space that we found in the literature are closely interrelated. The role of a studio from one artist's perspective is:

'so important, it's beyond words'

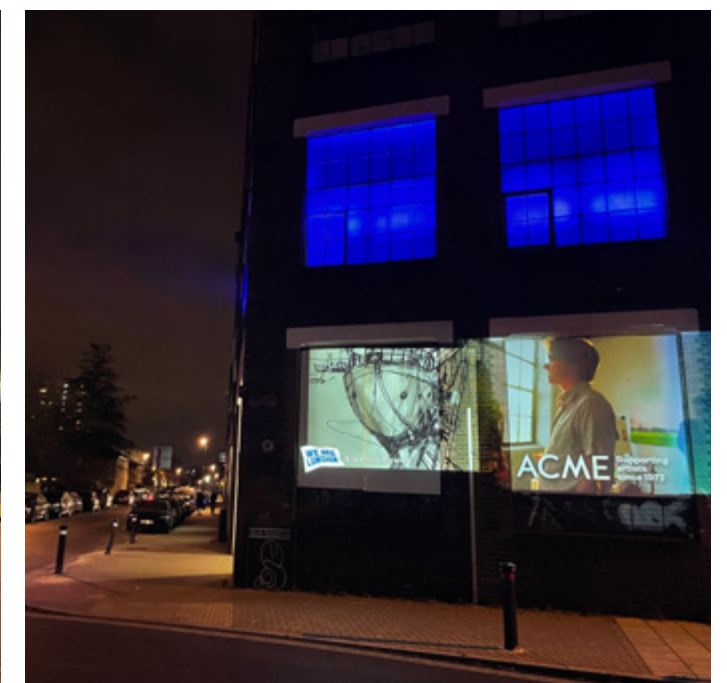
The scope of this pilot research has focused on the value that affordable studios provide to artists. 21 interviews were conducted with artists in Childers Street Studios between October and December 2021. Artists that were interviewed had been working in their studios for different lengths of time - a minimum of two years to a maximum of 15 years - and were a mix of genders (14 women and 7 men).

There are four key overarching findings emerging from the interviews, which are presented in this section.

The first three key findings relate to the value of the affordable studio space to the artists themselves. The fourth key finding relates to the value of studios to the wider area, and on the value of the neighbourhood to the artists. For each key finding, there are secondary findings, which relate to the different dimensions of value identified in the literature review: spatial, psychological / emotional, symbolic, material / economic, and social). These findings are illustrated in Figure 04 in the next page. The various dimensions of value are associated with a scale (value to the artist, the neighbourhood or the city) and the size of the circle reflects the emphasis placed on each value dimension across our 21 interviews.



Photographs by Ross Lammas



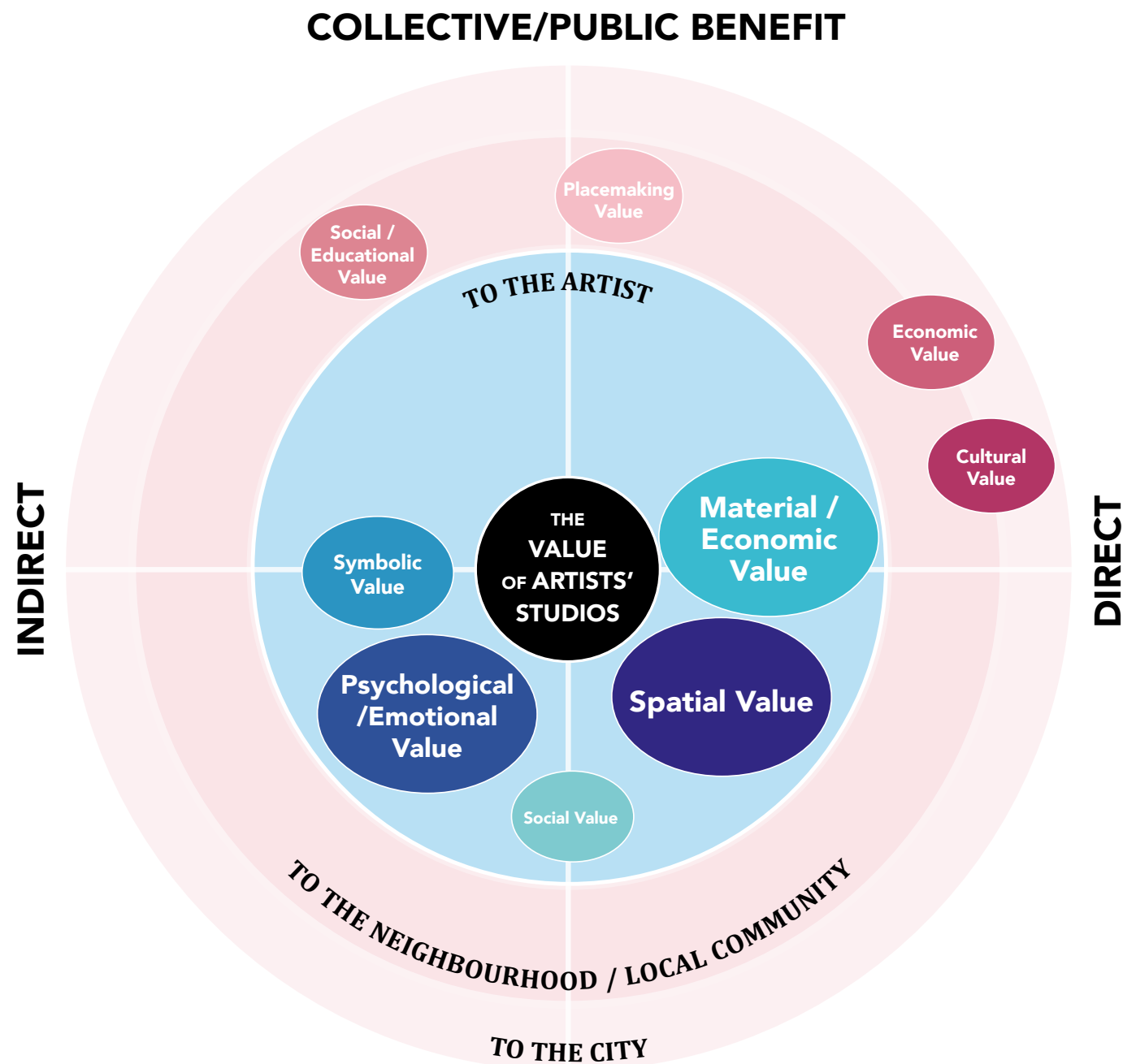


Figure 04: Multidimensional value framework: derived from the literature review and interviews, showing different types of value to the artists, the neighbourhood and the city.

The physical qualities of the studio space are fundamental for artistic practice

Artistic practices are widely diverse and have specific needs in terms of things such as room capacity, natural light, building structure. For example, the creation of metalwork sculptures has different spatial requirements than that of large-scale paintings.

For this reason, studio spaces that offer good physical qualities for artistic practice have a **spatial value** for artists. Certain artistic practices like welding-based sculpture and kiln-based ceramics are entirely dependent on specific physical characteristics which facilitate operating the required machinery.

"I suppose [I have] a total of about 8 to 10 tonnes of machinery [for metalwork sculpture] and when this place [Childers Street Studios] closes ..., that'll be the end of it for me... there's no way I could afford doing my work in my own house."

Studio spaces offer good physical qualities for artistic practice

One of the reasons why Childers Street studios are in such high demand is that their studio spaces share physical qualities that are optimal for a diverse range of artistic practices. These qualities make the studio spaces easily adaptable to specific artistic needs, therefore adding to their spatial value.

Physical qualities that make Childers Street studios

an ideal space for artistic practice include:

- Access to good quality natural light: old buildings with large windows are particularly good for artistic practice.
- Room capacity: High ceilings, large walls and floor space to accommodate working on large-scale sculptures, paintings and large-format artwork.
- Appropriate facilities: Floor durability and fire safety compliant. Infrastructure e.g. Specific electric wiring for kilns.
- Robust building, away from home, where smelly or noisy artistic practices – by-products of the artwork - can be accommodated and are accepted.
- Aesthetic: industrial architecture makes it look like a gallery space, can be used as exhibition space.
- Accessibility: An ideal studio space has easy car access, which makes it convenient to transport large materials, artwork and equipment in and out of the studio.

"You need that physical space... you need high ceilings, you need big walls to try things out"

"I can't work from home. The paintings are too large"

2 Having a studio, managed by a provider and located away from home, provides stability to produce art work and reduces financial and psychological stress

A place for storage

The studio provides a physical space with capacity to store artwork that is in-progress or past artwork that has not been sold. The need of storage expands onto the various materials and tools used for artistic practice, potentially even more so in the case of artists that work with different mediums simultaneously or at different points in time. As such, the studio becomes the lifetime story of an artist's work.

"Obviously, if I lost my studio now in the middle of making work on this project I'm working on at the moment, I would be quite devastated."

The studio was also described as an extension of the artist's household: personal belongings were stored there in-between house moves, or home renovations, inherited items were stored here if space at home was limited.

Having a studio outside one's own home as a dedicated space for artistic practice contributes to the long-term sustainability of the artistic lifestyle. In this context the studio is a space that encourages uninterrupted work and offers chances to promote and sell the work. Moreover, a studio space that is itself affordable and easily accessible on the daily commute has both **material/economic value** and **psychological value**.

A dedicated space for artistic practice, allowing work-life separation

For artists, it is vital to have a workspace for their artistic practice physically distanced from their domestic environment. This space allows them to focus on their work and be creative. This physical separation between the domestic space and the studio space is very important in supporting artists' livelihoods.

"I felt very blessed that I was able to get on my bike or my car or my scooter and come here and still have a normal functioning existence, that was away from, you know, the domestic environment. So having that separation between work and life, as you know, as a painter is important, I think, to be able to, to put them in different boxes is important".

"[doing art work at home] it's not the same. It's the fact that you go to a space which is dedicated to being creative, whatever form that takes, and that's important."

Yet, proximity to home was generally desired. The majority of the artists interviewed lived South of the Thames and considered Childers Street studios to be accessible. Many artists chose cycling as their preferred mode of transport, often on economic grounds where the precarity of the artists' lives impacts on the affordability of transport costs.

"I cycle here every day. So that's really helpful because you save money on travel... you don't have to go on public transport. That's like high up there [as a priority in choosing a studio space]"

The affordability of the studio and the long-term tenure allow artists to manage precarity

The majority of interviewees expressed the shared feeling that artwork is an irregular and therefore largely unreliable source of income. The majority of the artists we spoke to either combined their practice with other employment, funded their practice through grants or were reliant on their pensions. Their lifestyles were often portrayed as precarious.

For most artists, the studio space is a significant investment and takes up a substantial proportion of their income. Due to the costs of practice (i.e. rent of studio, materials, transport of art work, hiring models etc), in the words a few of interviewees, the studio space is often prioritised over the home space:

"I spend more on my studio than I do on where I live"

Acme's provision of affordable studios provides material/economic value and takes away some of the pressure artists have to negotiate tenable rents. In the words of one of the interviewees:

"Acme does some of that work for you, like justifying that there needs to be an affordable space. So I guess that makes it feel like there is a space for being an artist... that it is possible..."

Alongside affordability, a long-term tenancy brings security and further adds to the sustainability of the artistic lifestyle. The reliability of a long-term studio means that the artists can focus on their work without concerns of finding a suitable place to practice, relocating their artwork and storing it.

Many artists reported that they had joined the waiting list and were sub-letting or shared a studio with one or several other artists while waiting to be offered an affordable studio with Acme. Once they secure a space, the majority of those interviewed tend to hold onto it.

Being in a managed artists' studio building limits financial and emotional stress

Having an (affordable) studio space reduces financial stress on the artists and thereby has a positive **psychological value**. Having a studio space affordable to the point where all additional costs – bills, taxes etc - are covered within the rent releases artists from the pressure of having to deal with bills and negotiate with suppliers.

3 The studio space is central to the artist's sense of identity and well-being

The practical stresses of managing the property are taken on by Acme, and this has huge practical and psychological benefits for the artists:

"knowing that there's someone accountable for this space and this building, that I can ring and things happen, you know? A light goes out, or something goes bang. You know someone's gonna come and help you"

The fact that the buildings are kept secure, that studios can be locked and tenants feel relatively safe, further contributes to the artists' well-being. The reputation of Acme as an established organisation plays a significant role in the large number of studio applicants and tenants registered with Acme as a provider.

"I know them, I trust them, I feel secure with them."

The fact that Acme supports the artists, and it is run by artists or people from creative practices, plays an important part of that trust.

Our interview findings suggest that having a studio contributes significantly to the artists' sense of identity and well-being. The studio is a space for trial and error in which the artistic practice is continuously shaped over time. Equally important, the studio is the place in which the artists' innate nature can manifest itself fully. The studio therefore becomes a personal space of authenticity key to the artists' sense of self and well-being, providing **symbolic, psychological** and **emotional value**.

A space to develop the artist's artistic language

The studios provide a physical space to develop the artists' language and nurture their individual creativity. In this sense, the **spatial value** of having a studio space that supports their practice is complemented by the fact that this is a **symbolic** space where artists can concentrate on their work and where they can experiment without judgment or expectation.

A few of the interviewees referred to their journeys as artists and the role that the studio space had in continuing these journeys without compromising the quality and nature of practice or their sense of self. For many, having sole occupancy of a studio was key to this ability to experiment, allowing them to mature and develop as an artist.

"It's really important to be able to close your door, and to just experiment and do all this stuff that nobody can see, because that's how you develop"

A way to validate the artist's identity

The studio plays a significant role in the artist's self-identity. This **symbolic value** is crucial to the artist's well-being as they immerse themselves in their practice.

"we are not doing this for money, we're doing this because this is part of our identity, we have to do it... it would be like, not having a leg to not have a studio space to me"

Choosing to work on one's practice in a dedicated space is, according to the interviewees, a form of self-validation and a way of acknowledging the value of the time and work put into their practice.

"I think there still is a professional issue about having what looks like a studio for your practice. That in turn can make you feel that you value your time. When you're going to [the studio] you're going to work"

"You feel like you're valid. You're actually...this is my workshop, this is my job, this is my set up. This is how I earn my living. And what I do is important."

The need to validate the time dedicated to one's practice is enhanced by how limited this time is for many of those interviewed. Artists' working hours and schedules in the studios vary greatly, subject to their part-time jobs and personal commitments.

Having a studio space supports artists' well-being

The studio provides an intimate space for artists to process events in their lives and to (re)discover themselves. A few of the artists referred to the studio space as being 'a room of one's own':

"[it is] unimaginable to me not to have a space .. I think I'd be in a very bad place mentally without my studio."

"It's you and your artwork ... it's probably the most intimate architectural space you'll ever have"

Many artists spoke of the financial insecurity and precarity they faced, with the studio providing a crucial source of psychological stability:

"I just wanted one aspect of my life to feel settled and secure after what's felt like a lifetime of insecurity and precarity. I really just wanted to have a space that would always be there"

"It's just week to week, month to month, I can't look ahead. But it's obviously good to know that you have a good space to do stuff."

Being amongst a like-minded community of artists has a positive impact on artistic practice and the artists' psyche

Being in close proximity to fellow artists has social value and can be a source of inspiration and artistic drive for the artists' own practice. Moreover, the

specifics of artistic practice, which can produce noise and fumes, are accepted without contestation, which is not the case when artistic practices are carried out in domestic environments.

“being surrounded by other fine artists, that’s great, it’s so good for my work... it’s really important if you’re striving for excellence, then you see excellence around you”

Being in one of many studios used by artists in a building like Childers Street offers opportunities for encounter. Many of those interviewed valued the opportunity to socialise over a coffee, to exchange ideas about work, to share information on exhibitions, galleries and art fairs. Moreover, having other artists in the building also creates a support network, providing help or practical assistance when required, for example moving art work, borrowing equipment.

The shared reality of the artists’ lifestyle, with its challenges and rewards, leads to a sense of association with fellow artists and an apparent sense of belonging which counteracts feelings of isolation and alienation.

This sense of belonging was important, despite the fact that interviewees recognised socialising between artists in common areas is rare. This was largely due to the physical layout of Childers Street studios, and the fact that artists all have different schedules, prioritising work during the limited time they have in the studio.

“So it’s a kind of community even though we respect each other’s privacy, and especially now, I’m aware of how much less time I have, and how much more productive I need to be in the time that I do have.”

In this context, although for many of the artists renting in Childers Street practice time in the studio is heavily constrained, the fact that they are within a community of artists also has a positive impact on their wellbeing. Being in proximity to like-minded people is a source of psychological support and helps artists feel secure.

“Even if you didn’t see them, psychologically knowing there were other people in the building that you knew made a big difference to me”

“It’s knowing that there are other people here, I hear the door go, I hear people washing their brushes. It’s more a kind of presence. I think that’s important for me at this stage in my career”

4 The long-term security of artists’ studios enables artists to become embedded in their locales, providing circular benefits for communities and artists

The provision of artists’ studios in a neighbourhood enables artists to become embedded in their locales. This has circular benefits for the artists as well as the wider communities where they practice, generating **cultural, economic, social and placemaking value**.

The neighbourhood / city is a source of inspiration and custom for the artist

The neighbourhood can provide the artist with a source of supplies and materials for their work, as well as objects and subjects for their artistic practice, such as employing locals as models. The neighbourhood can provide artistic inspiration or the setting for an installation or performance piece, thus providing a form of **cultural value** for the artists.

In terms of a market for selling art, the wider city tends to be more relevant:

“it’s not really worth exhibiting those [bronze sculptures] in local space, because I won’t get the right audience to generate sales for bronzes”

“my collectors are more likely to go to Mayfair than they are to go to Deptford”

Artists and visitors to the studios generate moderate demand for the local economy

Artists source some of their supplies from local shops, although they buy the majority of their supplies online from established arts suppliers. The majority of interviewees mentioned having experimented with a number of materials and suppliers prior to deciding on the specific ones considers to be high quality and optimal for their specific practice. Nonetheless, many of the interviewees rely on local shops for ‘odd bits’, such as stretchers for canvases. Artists and their visitors also use local cafes, restaurants and some local services such as bike repair shops or hairdressers, supporting the local economy and generating economic value.

“So that’s [in nearby park] a really nice Italian restaurant, great coffee, good cakes, nice pasta meals. You know, it’s all very healthy and very good. And then there’s a really nice Vietnamese restaurant... And the Post Office is near.”

The studio's physical connectivity to other parts of London provides economic value to artists

The studio is not only a place to work, but also a place to exhibit work to gallerists and potential buyers. Therefore, having a studio increases the opportunities for artists to generate an income from their work, further generating **economic/material value** to the artist. Having a studio in London makes the artist visible, since practicing in London is perceived as positive due to the existing art scene and exposure of the artwork. The location of the studio within London is very important: collectors – e.g. those visiting London – have quick access to Deptford, so they can visit the artist's studio and see their work. The optimal location of Childers Street studios has significant material and economic value. As one interviewee, who is represented by a London-based gallery claimed:

"So if someone's traveling through London, they can be like, right, well, they're only in Deptford. We've got a client coming in, a collector coming in from Los Angeles. We're sticking him in a Uber, he'll be at your studio in an hour."

Artists' studios generate cultural, social and

educational value for the community

Artists we interviewed ranged in the extent to which they participated in 'open studio' events, bringing the community in to see their work in situ, or the extent to which they engaged with local communities. Some were active in doing public commissions situated in the area, others used the neighbourhood as a performance or installation space – an extension of the studio. Others organised local workshops or tutored people in the community. For some, outreach into the community or the wider meaning of their art was what motivated them:

"I'm not that interested in only talking to artists. I want my work to be accessible, and I want it to be understood."

"That's the extension of the studio into the community, but also the extension of me making a difference on the planet, of this studio allowing me to make a difference to the community and large."

Amongst others, there was some cynicism about the fact that artists were increasingly being required to demonstrate community impact and outreach in order to secure grant funding, with a suggestion that this sometimes distracted from the core purpose of their artistic pursuits. Some artists were more private about their work, preferring not to take part in Open Studio events, and Acme's support in their decision was valuable to them.

"So I can have privacy, I can have a degree of anonymity. Or I can choose if I want to, you know, to connect up with other Acme artists, but there's no pressure. And that's really valuable. I feel kind of protected by Acme in that sense."

"I've experienced in the past [on Open Studio days] when it's actually not good to have like, strangers coming into your studio because they can say all sorts of things about your work and you can feel vulnerable and then they leave and you're left with comments about your work."

Artists' studios help to create a sense of place

In supporting the local economy, artists' studios are helping to create a sense of place, providing a form of placemaking value. In addition, the working practices and schedules of artists mean that there are artists on site at different times of the day and evening, creating activity and providing some surveillance.

"Cities need artists and artists need space in the city."

"Take away these places [artist studios], you destroy a melting pot where people can be creative."



Multi-dimensional value framework: The table below provides a summary of the key features of value at different scales identified by artists in the interviews, revealing how multiple types of value can often be attributed to each feature. In compiling this table, the researchers have subjectively interpreted statements made by the interviewees to make judgments about the multiple values that apply.

	Spatial	Economic	Symbolic	Psycho-logical	Social	Cultural/creative	Place-making
THE VALUE OF THE STUDIO AS A SPACE							
Price/affordability		X		X			
Space/natural light	X	X		X			
Building is suitably equipped, durable and safe for a range of artistic practices	X						
For exhibiting work	X	X				X	
A space for creativity	X	X	X			X	
A space of one's own / privacy to experiment	X		X	X			
For storage	X						
Separation from home	X						
Accessibility	X						
Security	X			X			
THE VALUE OF THE STUDIOS AS A COMMUNITY OF ARTISTS							
Control of bills, rates, taxes		X		X			
Building management and maintenance							
A feeling of belonging			X	X	X		
Other artists provide inspiration and drive		X	X	X		X	
Support network, a helping hand				X	X		
Knowledge exchange		X				X	
A sense of 'togetherness'				X	X		
Validation/professionalism/reputation			X				
Supportive and trusting			X	X	X		
THE VALUE OF/ TO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND WIDER CITY							
A source of supplies, objects, subjects for artistic practice		X				X	
A source of inspiration		X				X	
Exposure of practice via open studios etc		X				X	
Proximity to galleries, potential buyers		X				X	
Increasing demand for local shops, cafes/restaurants and services		X			X		X
Vibrancy/activity/surveillance (day/night)					X		X
Community outreach					X		

CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided an insight into the lived experiences of artists working at Childers Street Studios in Deptford, southeast London. This focus on the artists’ perspective, using qualitative research, has enabled a broader understanding of the value of managed affordable artists’ studio provision to emerge.

Narrow conceptions of value that focus on the economic growth narrative – measured by, for example, jobs created or income generated – overlook the broader value of artists’ studios and the contribution of artists. This broader perspective encompasses social, psychological, spatial, cultural, educational and placemaking values, in addition to economic and material value.

The studio’s physical properties are critical for artistic practice, but having a studio also has psychological, emotional and symbolic value for artists, contributing to their well-being and identity. The methodology used here, which enables a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of artists, brings attention to the way the studio fits into their broader lives and livelihoods – both in terms of the practical (space to work, space to store work etc), and psychological (space away from home, space to focus and develop professional identity). It has also revealed the extraordinary resilience of artists.

The stability of long-term studio provision is crucial for artists and supports this resilience. Having a studio, managed by a reputable and supportive provider, reduces financial and psychological stress, and is an antidote to the precarity of the lives of

most artists. The studio is therefore at the heart of their livelihoods. Short-term leases and meanwhile provision do not therefore support the core needs of artists.

It is also this stability of studio provision that enables artists to develop ties with the wider community. But artists are an integral part of this community and the relationship is circular: there is value for the community of having artists working there, but there is also value to the artists of being embedded in a community – with their understanding of community extending beyond the neighbourhood into the city.

Not all artists work directly with and in their communities, and the value lies in their artistic contribution, in the work itself. Some prefer to be left to work in isolation and the relationship might be with the wider city, with gallerists, customers and other institutions in the city. As such, the location and accessibility of the studio enabling these wider connections, is key.

The very particular nature of artists’ work and the centrality of the studios to their livelihoods means there is a danger in mixing artists’ studios under the umbrella of creative workspace, which risks overlooking the specificities of artists’ studios, as well as the spatial and material requirements of artistic practices.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the key findings and conclusions of this report, eight recommendations are put forward. These recommendations cover policy and planning interventions, funding and investment, advocacy, further research, and are directed primarily at the GLA and the London boroughs.

1. **An understanding of value in the built environment needs to be broader than economic value and informed by the lived experiences of actors and users.** Research that seeks to establish value should move beyond narrow conceptions of economic value to also focus on the broader values that can be difficult to quantify, including spatial, social, cultural, psychological and educational values. This requires a reorientation of methodologies to focus more on qualitative and ethnographic research.
2. **Recognise the holistic benefits of workspace for artists** - the psychological and symbolic value to artists of having a studio, which is important in supporting their livelihoods and their work.
3. **The value of artists' studios, and of supporting artists, needs to be seen as distinct from the value of creative workspace, or creative industries more broadly.** In policy terms, artists studios should be seen as a separate category, not lumped together with other creative workspace. This will ensure that the specific needs of artists and their studio providers are recognised, and that their provision is not negatively impacted by policies that benefit

wider workspace provision only.

4. **Value artists studios as places of work and the contribution of artists in terms of the work they produce.** Policies and funding streams for artists should primarily support them in their core objective to produce artwork, placing less emphasis on the need for artists to generate positive impacts in their communities, to promote regeneration or meet broader social objectives.
5. **The GLA and boroughs should be mindful, when developing their policies, of the continued need for long-term, secure studio provision for artists.** Policies that support meanwhile uses and provide temporary, short-term lets do not replace the need for longer-term solutions.
6. **Where funds are allocated to support workspace initiatives, or other support for creative industries, a portion of these funds should be allocated specifically for artists, and there should be a monitoring of the impact on artists' studios as a separate category.** There have been a number of initiatives and funding streams announced by the GLA that, on paper, are designed to benefit artists and artist studio providers. These include the Good Growth Fund, Creative Enterprise Zones, and the Creative Land Trust. However, to date, there have been limited benefits for artists and artists studio providers specifically, and there has been no formal evaluation undertaken of the impact of these initiatives. These initiatives

would benefit from more targeted funding to artists, and monitoring of outcomes. A better understanding of the business models of artists' studio providers, may also enable these initiatives to support artists studio providers in developing sustainable property solutions, which move away from a reliance on temporary solutions and short leases.

7. **Boroughs need to be more proactive in facilitating partnerships between developers and artists workspace providers, and boroughs' affordable workspace policies need to be more mindful of the specific requirements of artists' studios.** Artists require more space than other desk-based creative workers, and their means are more limited. If artists' value is seen in very limited economic terms, the outcomes of affordable workspace policies may prioritise creative workspace that accommodates a higher job density than that provided in artists' studios, and providers that are able to pay more per square foot. Artist studio providers typically require more space and a long lease, in order to support their business model of the long-term provision of secure and affordable workspace for their artist tenants. This requires more pro-active support from the borough in partnering developers with artist studio providers - adding artists' studio providers to the generic 'workspace providers list' that is provided to developers upon planning approval is insufficient.

8. **There is a need for further research, lobbying and advocacy work, and to provide better support for smaller, less established artists studio providers.** Wider networks, such as the newly established Creative Workspace Network, could advocate and increase agency for the affordable artist studio sector. There is a need for a better understanding of the challenges facing the less established and smaller artists' studio providers, and the initiatives and solutions that would help the broader sector expand its provision. Established studio providers, such as Acme, could play a leadership role in developing guides for the sector, drawing on its own long experience.

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APPENDIX.

EXTENDED LIST OF INTERVIEW QUOTES

This section provides a transcription of some extended quotes captured during the interviews organised under the four key findings headings.

The physical qualities of the studio space are fundamental for artistic practice.

"It felt really important to try and have a studio where I was able to do that kind of hot work [welding] as well. And there are very few options for that, especially as regulations have been getting tighter and tighter ... this [Childers Street Studios building] is amazing because it's got a metal floor [at ground floor level]. This is an old foundry building And that's been really good, because it meant that I can bring all of the work in house, whereas before I was just having a studio where I was doing painting, and I had to go elsewhere to do the metalwork. That's very handy, so it's made [the practice] much more logical to me."

"This building [neighbouring mixed residential and artist studios development] has just been redeveloped. So all the facilities seemed really clean, everything was really nice. But each space was really tiny, which made me realise how lucky I was. And one of the first things an artist there said to me when they asked me where my studio was and I said it was here, was <oh, yeah, that building with all the really big studios>, and I thought that is so telling."

"The space I'm in now ...it's large enough that any smell disperses. It's more healthy, really. And as an artist, your motivation, if you've had a week of using quite pungent solvents, what will happen is you won't think <oh, I don't want to paint the next week>, you'll think < have to do it>."

"I suppose I have a total of about 8 to 10 tonnes of machinery [for metalwork sculpture] and when this place [Childers Street Studios] closes in six years, that'll be the end of it for me. I have to stop this and start doing origami paper because there's no way I could afford doing my work in my own house."

"I have my daughter's art, my art, my father's art because he was an artist, ..., so I have all this bumper storage. That's part of why one needs a studio as well, because you can't just stick things in garages."

"I've got boxes of pins that sometimes get purposed into jobs, and other times just get shoved up in the storage up there. For whenever I might need to use them. So again, I'm really lucky, not all the spaces have storage. So that is absolutely fantastic. Because it means that you can keep things and then sometimes a job comes in and you think oh, yes, I've got that."

"[Having a studio space is] Absolutely essential for my practice. Sculpture can be so many different

things these days with so many materials, but mine is fairly traditional: I do use clay, I do use plaster. Plaster can be messy, clay can be messy. So I don't need a crisp clean studio like a photographer might necessarily and I might need to make some noise. It's certainly not the sort of work I could do on a kitchen table or at home. And also once you've made the work, you've got to put it somewhere. So if it is something that's reasonably big, you've got to store it. And as time goes by there are more of them. So [having a studio space] it's absolutely essential for me. Absolutely essential for my practice."

Having a studio, managed by a provider and located away from home, provides stability to produce art work and reduces financial and psychological stress.

"I love Acme as an organisation... I think I always held them up in quite high regard because it was one of the few studios providers that were, it felt to me, genuinely affordable, and that had artists' best interests at heart."

"They [Acme] are quite reliable. And they're quite clear about how they manage buildings and their response to repairs and things like that. So they're definitely example of very good practice... In a way, your time is valuable. So I suppose like a lot of artists, you, you don't want to have to worry about a leak."

"I just built this mezzanine. A couple of months ago or so Acme hired a contractor who did the work for me, and he was really a step up to standard and stuff. And that really, really helped me out. Because I was like, how am I going to do

this? Because it needs to be safe if it's supposed to provide storage. So Acme were so helpful. They [Acme] can fix things if something breaks and usually everything just works like clockwork, that's the thing. I mean, they change the lightbulbs if they break."

"I would have to be honest and say, the reason I ended up with an Acme Studios at the time was because they were on the whole, the most affordable, they definitely have the lower ends of rents, and that would be key, but also they were the people who had a space at a time I needed a space and that was also key."

"Affordability [of the studio space] is obviously important and so is proximity to home. It depends on the person, because if you're young, you can cycle [to the studio]."

"As I said, 20 minutes on the bicycle, half an hour [to get to the studio space]. Rather than coming to work in a car, these days it's much quicker on a bicycle, which I now use. And that's really very handy."

"It's not the area per se, that I consider, it's just whether or not there is a studio, and how far it is from my home. Because living in [current area of accommodation], I use the car to come here, because otherwise it's a tube and a train or I think three buses or something like that. So it's not the easiest studio to get to. I need the car if I'm going to be transporting paintings or anything to arrange materials; I need the car to do all that. So yeah, the area where the studio is located is important."

"When I first graduated, I worked from home for a while but I missed the separation, like the travelling

time. As much as I hate travelling, I actually quite enjoy going to the [studio] space where I practice."

"It [the habit of working a full day in the studio] works brilliantly. I have my painting day, I get up at six o'clock, I don't allow myself to read any social media. I go to the studio, and I just work through for 12 hours. So that's my sort of way of producing work in the studio, where the studio is useful, and I'm able to make work."

"I think a studio is also about a space to think, you know, it's perhaps a room of one's own. If you share your life with someone else, you know, if you have a family, that [having a studio space] actually is about separation. It's about the separation between home and work... this separation in itself is quite valuable."

"Occasionally someone just comes [into the studio] to look at your work or chatting about your work. Whether or not they're going to show your work or sell your work is not really important. And it could be that nothing will come of that curator's visit for another five years. But that doesn't mean it isn't valuable. Or perhaps they saw your work in a show, and they were in [the area where the studio is located] five years later, and then they come to have a look and see what you're doing."

"You know, people would ask me <do you have anything [artwork] available?> And then they would come and maybe would buy something from my studio".

The studio space is central to the artists' sense

of identity and well-being.

"As I look back after I left the [Childers Street] studio... the essential thing is that I had a very big space in Childers Street. Really, it was wonderful and ... I was there all the time, I was in my world. I had all this work everywhere, loads of work, it's a journey, isn't it, to find your work ... this [the current practice medium] has been quite a difficult searching process."

"I play with that [piece of metalwork sculptural art], and I play. Where does this work come from? It comes from the work I've just done. While I'm doing that, I think what if I do this on the other side or twice as long or, I know, we could do it again with triangles rather than the square. All of that, I'm playing with Euclidean geometry really."

"[about working in a shared studio] I was constantly being distracted by other people's activity, or music or conversations or whatever. And it wasn't good for the work. So, I've been making decisions that are best for the work. And at my own detriment to some extent, because I've worked in really cold spaces, or spaces with leaks or things that aren't perfect environmentally, but these were the best spaces I could afford to allow the work to develop. I suppose that's the thing."

"Because as an oil painter, you can't really work in your bedroom, it doesn't work like that. You need that space in which you are able to develop your work, it is so important. You need that physical space to have your dreams out, because your head is not enough. You need high ceilings, you need big walls to try things out."

"I think if I had to just work at home I would feel

like a bit of a failure. That sounds really ridiculous, maybe I have quite rigid ideas of what it is to be an artist. If you are a two-dimensional artist like me, we make drawings or paintings or sculpture and I feel like you need to have a space to do it.”

“Another thing that matters for me, because of the way that I feel about the art world and certain biases within the art world, is to feel that I’m not under any pressure to perform as an artist on behalf of an organisation, to represent that organisation. So [in Childers Street Studios] I can have privacy, I can have a degree of anonymity. Or I can choose if I want to connect with other Acme artists, but there’s no pressure. And that’s really valuable. Especially if I’m working within very pressured laws outside of the studio, I feel kind of protected by Acme in that sense.”

“The artist career is very precarious. If you’re trying to survive as an artist, you don’t know for how long that is going to be. ... So it’s from week to week, month to month, you can’t look ahead. But it’s obviously good to know that you have a good space to do stuff in, to do your work. That’s why it’s so important.”

“I mean, if I’m working, I’m really happy. So if I think that [the studio] is a place that I can get to easily, that I’m not worried about covering the rent for it, and is mostly fit for purpose, that makes me very happy for the most part. Because if the work is going well, I feel happy. And if it is not going well, I’m less happy. So it’s quite a simple measure.”

“Before my job was more permanent, I would be here all the time. So I used to only work one day a week. And then I would come in at the weekends

as well. And I loved that because it felt really like this was mine. This is my space, this is why I did.”

“Having a space to make work is sort of a way of giving yourself permission to do that [to work]. And I have found that, for example, when I haven’t had much time to make work, I have found it really difficult because I’ve always been creative in some way or another. And actually, I find it very difficult if I don’t have an outlet for that.”

“I feel there were experiences in the past [on Open Studio Day events] when it actually wasn’t good to have strangers coming into your studio, because they can say all sorts of things about your work and you can feel vulnerable and then they leave and you’re left with comments about your work. And it might not always be so positive for you. So you just have to protect yourself sometimes. Because [the studio] it’s like my sacred space where I can make the mistakes I want to and I can decide what I think is right or not.”

‘[Having a studio] is vital, absolutely vital. And there’s not a day that I don’t open this door [to the studio] and it brings lightness to me being in this space... [during the pandemic lockdown] I was just so grateful for it on a daily basis, because it’s isolated, you know, you’re not bothering anyone else. So I was able to leave the house, come here, do some work, and then go home. I couldn’t do without it. I couldn’t. So it’s hugely important.”

“In this building especially [Childers Street Studios], people are really serious [in terms of their artistic practice]. The people that are working here regularly are really committed artists. And we don’t hang out and have coffee all day long, but we pass

each other and chat occasionally. And there’s just a lovely sense that there are other people doing this strange job alongside you, that’s great. It’s really important.”

“So somebody might travel an hour to get to their studio, or somebody might travel 10 minutes. And when they come to the studio, what they want to do is work, because they might have another job. So they’ve only got a limited time in the studio and they’re going to make the best of it. So any chatting in the corridors or anything like that, they might not bother doing”.

“The presence [of an artist community] is indirect. We’re not socialising directly, in that sense, but that doesn’t affect a certain sense of community. It’s knowing that there are other people here [in the building] and I hear the door go, and I hear people washing their brushes. And it’s more just about the presence of others. I think that’s important for me at this stage of my career.”

“I knew about Acme and I’d been on the waiting list for quite a long time for this building. Because it was the closest big studio building near to where I lived. I also knew a couple of people in the building, so that made a bit of a difference. ... a couple of my tutors, from school had studios here. So people I respected had chosen a studio space in this building as a good place where to invest their time and money; therefore I thought that was probably a good place to choose.”

“Sometimes you just need to be able to say to someone <could you help me move this thing?>. Then you might have a little conversation, say, <have you seen this show?> Or, you know, <have

you looked at this artist’s work?>. They can be quite small things, and they are important.”

The long-term security of artists’ studios enables artists to become embedded in their locales, providing circular benefits for communities and artists.

“I’m sort of semi feral with the studios. So I love being outside and it’s very important to me to have somewhere to make the work and to have a sense of my own space to come to. That’s absolutely vital, it’s so important. But it’s also the fact that ... the studio building is located where it is. I love this area. I’ve lived in southeast London since 1995 and I know it really well. So the kind of spaces where I photograph my work, I know them inside out, they’re so familiar to me. And it’s not just the studio and the building, it’s the fact that it’s in this area.”

“I guess I just observe people in my area and people around me, funny things they do. It could actually be anything: it could be architecture, could be playgrounds, it could be someone passing by. It could be anything.”

“[In my practice I use] mainly found object fragments and discarded materials ..., wherever it is that I happen to walk, or sometimes drive. And I’ll see these things and bring them to my studio and work with them. And then I do sometimes buy some parts mainly from DIY shops, or sometimes from Haberdashers, but it’s mainly DIY materials. And then the kind of discarded stuff.”

“I really value having access to other exhibitions and museums, you know, things like that are

source material for me all the time. And they're about being in a city [like London]."

"[London] It's an amazing city, absolutely incredible... the ability [during student years] at lunchtime to just walk down the road to the National Portrait Gallery or to the Royal Academy or to any one of the large commercial galleries or ...go to 15 openings in one day ..., meeting other artists that kind of thing. ... Being in London, I felt sorry for people who didn't live in London or didn't have the ability to go and see as much as I did. I mean, it feeds into your work in every possible way. [S]o you go and see rock concerts, or you go to listen to poetry; you just have an incredible cross section of things that you could go and do and see."

"I use the local DIY shops for other stuff, but not for art materials as such. I think that there was one shop opened in Deptford, but it wasn't particularly well stocked. You need to go to the bigger shops for that [art supplies]."

"The stuff I get around here [in the proximity of the studio buildings] was more like wood for the studio. For example, I've put in a few walls inside the studio, stuff like that. .. Every now and then a new art shop pops up in Deptford and it's nice to go and look at the stuff, but then I never end up buying it from there because it maybe isn't the thing that I want or it seems quite expensive."

"I love the proximity with Goldsmith's. I've been to cinema there, to exhibitions held there, and I've done short courses or evening classes there as well, because that fitted really well with the end

of the studio day."

"I used to do like art tutoring in the studio as well. And I think I will start again, in fact one guy is going to come and we're going to make things here in this studio. So it's also quite good for that. Like, it's helpful to have the space to be able to do more messy artwork with people."

"[During Open Studio Days] We [the artists in the studio] would sit there, with some crisps and some beers. And the worst thing, of course, is you sit there and someone comes to the door and they don't always walk in, but walk around and just go; but some of them do [come inside the studio]."

"I think that because of a certain image of the artist that society has, here [in the UK] also, most of the grants and stuff you can apply for are always tied to some kind of function. For example, if you can do some community engagement ... There's little room for it [the practice] to be quite abstract or to be art for its own sake. ... And then it's like, if you're an artist, do you automatically have the skill to also work with homeless people? I don't think so. And it's a weird sort of expectation. I mean, a lot of artists are quite dysfunctional and then you're expected to be hyper functional in this way that you can organize community events. I don't know, I think it's a sort of conflict."

"I think a lot of artists try to find that balance between the place where they live and the place where they work, make it as close and logical as possible. So in a sense, the work place and that environment is a kind of extension of one's lifestyle choices where, you know, we might support grassroot initiatives, local stuff and independent

enterprises. Because I think that often, and it is kind of cliché, where one chooses a studio goes hand in hand with a lot of the way artists think about the world ...; this means avoiding the kind of big corporate stuff and supporting the smaller independents. So in that sense, I guess that's why you find that synonymous stuff happening. For example, the places in the city where there's a lot of independent activity are also the places that are artistically creative and buzzy and where there's lots of studios and affordable places to live. Hackney is a good example of that, and so is Lewisham."



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