national federation of artists' studio providers

nfasp

Artists' studios: creating public benefit
A Nottingham case study

Oldknows Studio Group
and Egerton Studios
Oldknows Factory, Nottingham

Michael Cubey, November 2007

Researched and written by Michael Cubey
Michael Cubey is a practising artist and a consultant, in particular focusing on advice, research and advocacy in relation to affordable studio provision for artists. He also works part-time at ACAVA in London, which provides studios for 350 artists in 18 buildings, managing the maintenance and health and safety of the ACAVA portfolio. Michael is a trustee of studio organisation Bow Arts Trust in London, housing over 100 artists and the Nunnery gallery,

Edited by Val Millington, Director, NFASP and Jonathan Harvey, Co-Director, Acme Studios

Commissioned and published by NFASP
The National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers (NFASP) is the professional body for groups and organisations providing affordable artists' studios in England.

The NFASP aims to secure, sustain, improve and increase affordable studio provision in England. It will address the needs of studio organisations, providing advice and support, sharing information and expertise and maximising resources to improve the status and sustainability of the sector.

The Federation will also act as champion and advocate, influencing policy and decision-making to create a climate that supports the studios sector and artists.

Established in June 2006, the NFASP is now in its second phase of development under the direction of its trustees and a small professional staff. By June 2008, the Federation expects to be fully established and offering a range of services and resources.

NFASP
Unit 5 Toynbee Studios
28 Commercial Street
London E1 6AB
Tel: 020 7426 0067
www.nfasp.org.uk

Designed by Area
cara@designbyarea.com

Front cover images, clockwise from left:
The Oldknows Factory, Nottingham. Photo: Michael Cubey
'Milch' performance, Cabaret Pink, Oldknows Open Studios. Photo: Denise Weston
Studio of Chris Lewis Jones at Oldknows Studio Group, May 2007. Photo: Michael Cubey

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank the following for giving their time to talk to me and for responding to questionnaires: the organisers of the Oldknows Studio Group, Simon Withers and Denise Weston; the organiser of Egerton Studios, Paul Matosic; and Chris Lewis Jones, Chair of Oldknows Studios. They were all very helpful in discussing the local context, the current activities of the studios and artists, the history of the organisations and suggesting others to talk to.
Michael Cubey, May 2007

A full list of all individuals and organisations consulted can be found in appendix 1.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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Foreword

Oldknows and Egerton studio groups are typical of many small-scale studio organisations across England who formed as a result of individual artists coming together around the shared need for cheap space in which to work. They are often voluntarily managed and frequently occupy redundant industrial buildings in poor condition, on short-term leases. Not always visible, these groups fulfil a vitally important role, supporting artists at the basic level of production by providing space at rents they can afford and by providing a supportive environment for their creative practice.

Many larger studio providers and those registered as educational charities deliver public programmes of activity in addition to studio provision. These programmes include exhibitions, educational and outreach programmes, residencies and professional development activities. With paid, professional staff and resources, they have the reporting and evaluation mechanisms in place to demonstrate the public benefit delivered by the organisations themselves and by the artists who benefit from affordable workspace.

For many of the smaller groups, however, the evidence of the public benefit they create is less obvious. Their main aim is the straightforward provision of affordable studio space for artists. Nevertheless, the artists these spaces support are individually and collectively involved in an extensive and diverse range of activities with public outcomes. They show their work in public exhibitions, take part in educational and community projects, teach, organise public events, participate in advisory and selection panels and are involved in mentoring and creative networks. In doing this, they make a substantial contribution to culture and society as a whole.

This case study, the first commissioned by the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers (NFASP), demonstrates the considerable public benefit such groups and organisations deliver, through the provision of affordable studios alone. Their activities, and those of the artists they support, complement studio organisations whose core charitable objectives explicitly require them to deliver programmes which benefit the public.

The study also shows, all too clearly, the vulnerability of these groups. 2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the Oldknows Studio Group and the 19th for Egerton Studios. Unfortunately, the leases they have on their current spaces run out in 18 months' time and their future is far from certain. If these artists lose their spaces, not only will they face a serious disruption to their practice, but the public benefit that the groups create may cease altogether.

We want artists at the heart of our towns, cities and communities and artists want to be there – but many are being forced out. The NFASP will work with developers and policy-makers to help secure the future of groups such as Oldknows and Egerton to ensure that they are planned into future developments for the long-term.

Val Millington, Director, NFASP, November 2007

"Without low-cost studios enabling artists to subsidise the public sector only commercial art practices – the 'creative industries' – would be sustainable, public museums and galleries would be empty, the tax-paying public culturally deprived, and the art press non-existent."[1]

1 Introduction and context for this study

Currently, many affordable studio organisations are, or aspire to be, registered as charities, usually with objects relating to the relief of poverty or the advancement of education (in and through the arts). This can mean that some organisations stretch themselves to provide public programmes of activity such as exhibitions and educational activities with limited resources in order to meet their charitable objectives. Others may experience difficulty in defining and monitoring 'poor' or 'necessitous' artists, although they know that the artists they support cannot afford to rent space on the open market.

This case study looks at two Nottingham-based studio groups, Oldknows Studio Group and Egerton Studios, both small-scale organisations, voluntarily run and operating as unincorporated groups, but with a twenty-year presence at one site in the city, the Oldknows factory in St Ann's Hill Road.

By looking in depth at the activities of some of the artists based at these two studio organisations, this study demonstrates that artists in receipt of an affordable studio from such groups can gain the support, confidence and security that enables them to participate in cultural life and provide a range of important direct and indirect benefits to the public.

These public benefits cover a range of educational and cultural areas, and include:

- activities stimulating the development of individual creative potential
- activities benefiting the health, well-being, rehabilitation or personal development of members of the public
- activities that develop people's creative, interpretive, and critical skills
- creative work in the public domain, such as exhibitions or public art – often freely available
- widening access to, and participation in, cultural and creative projects
- training and other development opportunities
- fostering and establishing creative networks for intellectual and practical exchange between artists and others
- mentoring and work experience
- teaching and development in cultural, artistic and creative disciplines
- the research and dissemination of knowledge and critical thought which can benefit cultural life.

Through the evidence that follows, this case study demonstrates that the Oldnows and Egerton artists have made an important contribution to their locality and the community of which they are a part and to the wider cultural sphere. **It also shows that they are only able to do so by having access to an affordable studio**.

> *"I see the form and content of 'my work' as an increasingly desperate attempt to retain some genuine social agency."*[2]

This study is a companion to two case studies, commissioned by Acme and Capital Studios, of two London studio providers[3] which, unlike these Nottingham groups, are both registered charities, which provide a wide range of public benefit directly as organisations as well as through the activities of individual artists based in their studios. Also, crucially, the two London organisations, ACAVA and APT, own their buildings. This gives them and the artists they support an enviable level of security and confidence.

Why artists need affordable studios

Non-commercial visual artists, like others working in the creative industries sector, need access to a secure, appropriate space in order to work. Many artists benefit from the informal shared networking and opportunities that arise out of working in proximity to other artists. In this they are similar to many other creative industries.

Unlike 'desk-based' creative industries, many visual artists require a space that can be used for 'dirty' processes (painting, sculpture, printing) *and* 'clean' work (preparation of lectures, workshops, web-based work, archiving, showing work in the studio to visitors).

Most visual artists need 24-hour access (to fit in with a portfolio of other income producing activity), good light to work in, high ceilings, and enough space to work on several pieces of work or multiple projects simultaneously.

What is a 'non-commercial visual artist'?
An artist who makes art work primarily for its creative, cultural, intellectual or philosophical value, rather than for its commodity value.

What is meant by an 'affordable' studio?
An affordable artist's studio is a workspace which enables an artist to sustain and develop their practice and which is made available to artists who are unable to afford to rent workspace on the open market in addition to somewhere to live.

For non-commercial visual artists, a studio fulfils many different functions. It is:

- a thinking space
- a making space
- a meeting place
- a research space
- a storage space
- an exhibition space
- an office

Artists need affordable studios. The majority of non-commercial artists do not earn enough from their art practice to be able to afford a studio space at open market rents in addition to a separate place to live.[4] Visual artists' incomes have remained low as a sector and tend to remain low for much of artists' working lives:

'Not only are they poorly paid in comparison to other professionals, but unlike other professions, there seems to be little increase in earnings as their careers have progressed. Regardless of experience, the majority earned between £8,000 and £11,400 in 2005-2006.'[5]

"There is a demand by curators, museums and galleries for my work, and the tax-paying public and art press respond very positively, yet the market in terms of sales of goods and services is negligible – I have existed for 25 years in poverty."[6]

Denise Weston's studio at Oldknows Studios.
Photo: Michael Cubey

How the public benefits by artists having affordable studios

"If you don't have visual artists, fine artists, then you don't have all the other strands of the Creative Industries. Visual art is the base of all the other parts of the Creative Industries. Yet the artist is often the very last on the list when we talk about the Creative Industries."[7]

Many visual artists create a wide range of public benefits through the myriad activities that their studio-centred art practice supports, for example exhibitions in public galleries, public art projects, or teaching in schools, further and higher education.

Some artists are also involved in providing direct benefit to the public by using their skills and experience to help deliver projects with partner agencies that have recognised the rewards of working with skilled artists in achieving certain public benefit outcomes. These projects often include educational and participatory workshops, either with the general public or with particular groups - children, young or elderly people, or disadvantaged sectors of the community including those with mental or health difficulties.

Nearly all the artists interviewed and who responded to questions in this case study were adamant that, without an affordable studio space, they would be unable to produce the sort of artwork, or conduct the sort of art practice, that their studio space currently allows them to which, in turn, leads to a range of direct public benefits. Furthermore, without the stable base of the studio, they would eventually not be able to deliver the range, or quality, of other public benefits that they were currently engaged in as experienced, *practising* artists:

"With my university work, I find that both the situations of making work in the studio and teaching are quite closely linked. If I did not have the studio the effect of my own input into teaching would be diminished."[8]

"If artists were teaching without the culture of artistic activity supported by studios, it would be like a university science department giving up research."[9]

2 Direct and indirect public benefit through art: some definitions

The following are some of the main activities through which non-commercial visual artists create public benefit, either as direct or indirect public benefits.[10] There are obviously many linkages between the various groupings.

Direct public benefit

Direct public benefit is brought about through opportunities, activities and outcomes that are conceived specifically for groups and members of the public, and delivered using the facilities of various organisations and their partners and the creativity and expertise of artists and other creative practitioners.

Direct public benefit can be classed under various headings:

Artistic outputs in the public domain: these can include 'open studios' ('exhibition' weekends taking place in the artists' studios), exhibitions, performances, screenings of an artist's work in a public gallery or similar venue, or public realm projects.

Access to creative opportunities: workshops, participatory projects and other activities aimed at developing peoples' creative potential, or where such opportunities might be of benefit to health, well-being, rehabilitation or personal and career development. This can include special sessions tailored for widening access to, and participation in, creative and cultural projects for particular groups and new audiences.

Gallery and other education projects: these are talks, tours and participatory sessions held within a gallery environment, or in conjunction with a gallery programme, to engage with wider audiences and to broaden the understanding of visitors and participants.

Artists working in education: this refers to artists' input into education at a strategic and delivery level, at the school, further or higher levels of formal education, through teaching, lecturing and other means.

Indirect public benefit

Indirect benefits include opportunities, activities and outcomes in culture, society and the public domain that are a product of the work and activities of artists as researchers, educators, consultants and facilitators in various contexts and institutions.

Again, indirect public benefit can be classed under some broad headings:

Consultancy, facilitation and support structures: this involves artists contributing their experience, knowledge and skills for the benefit of public consultation and debate. Usually on a voluntary basis, this is through involvement in local and national steering groups on cultural policy issues, artist selection panels, mentoring with other cultural groups, and other advisory work involving an artist's knowledge and expertise.

Critical practice and creative networks: this refers to artists setting up, or being involved directly in creative networks, contributing to critical debate and sharing their knowledge.

Residencies and research projects: a studio, and an artist's practice, involves research and development, as much as production. Artists contribute to wider cultural research and share this through their direct involvement in residencies at cultural institutions and in other contexts.

Who are 'the public' and the beneficiaries for this activity?

The range of activities, events, exhibitions and other outputs created by non-commercial visual artists benefits all sectors of society. 'The public' or beneficiaries of the creative and cultural output of visual artists working in studios is therefore very diverse. They can be broken down into various sub-sections[11] and those groups may benefit from different aspects of the cultural activities that are outlined above and explored in detail in sections 4 and 5 of this study:

The general public: the wider community which constitutes an audience for, or participates in, creative, artistic and cultural life.

Particular age groups: various members of the community with common interests, or needs or concerns in line with their stage of life, such as elderly people, youth groups and children.

Other social and community groups: various groups with common interests, needs or concerns brought together through self-assembly or the provision of particular facilities and services.

Health and social care service users and those in custody or rehabilitation: members of the community being supported by various service and special care providers.

Those in education: students in formal education; from postgraduate, through higher, further, secondary and primary education, to very young people at nursery or pre-school level.

Other creative practitioners and cultural professionals: other types of cultural workers such as curators, critics, practitioners in other art forms, arts administrators and cultural policy makers.

Aspiring artists and creative practitioners: those with an interest in developing themselves towards creative, cultural or artistic professions or careers.

Studio artists: artists that the studio organisations are supporting to develop their practice and produce their work through the provision of affordable studios and other facilities and opportunities.

Other artists: artists from outside of the organisation who do not have studios, but who benefit from, or participate in, some of its facilities and opportunities.

In terms of the latter two categories, the majority of these artists are on low incomes, and value greatly the benefit of accessing cultural and critical networks that are built around studio organisations.

> *"The artists are our audience, as well as our collaborators."*
> (Stella Couloutbanis)[12]

'...it's got us all working together in this place and that's a good thing. Before, we all worked in our own spaces. We're thinking about new ideas like having shows together.'[13]

3 The studio groups

This chapter introduces Oldknows Studio Group and Egerton Studios, how they are organised, a little of their history, where they are situated and their local context.

These two groups were chosen as they are, in many ways, representative of numerous other small groupings of artists across the country, both in urban and rural areas, who have organised themselves on a largely voluntary basis, to provide affordable studio space for non-commercial visual artists. They have also come together, or stayed together, as groups of individual artists because of the informal, shared networking, peer support and other opportunities that arise out of working in proximity to other artists.

Inevitably, the nature and scale of activities that Oldknows and Egerton artists produce, differs from that of other studio groups, due to the individual artists involved and the nature of their creative practices and interests.

The site and the local context

Founded by James Oldknows[14], the Oldknows factory building in St Ann's Hill Road, was built and used for many years as a lace production factory. As many artists around the country have found, the high ceilings and good natural light of ex-industrial buildings make for excellent working space for the production of fine art.

The building stands between two very different areas of Nottingham, both socially and economically. To one side is Mapperley Park, a conservation area with many distinguished Victorian houses, to the other side and just down the hill from the studios is St Ann's, a socially deprived area with a high crime rate. The studios, and artists, could be seen as a buffer between the two areas: "*a liminal space: aspirationally the artists may belong to one area, economically they belong to the other.*"[15]

Regeneration plans for the city and the growing demand for this type of workspace by the more economically powerful sections of the creative industries and associated media businesses, currently threaten the future of these studio groups as the building approaches lease end within the next 18 months.

The Oldknows Factory, St Ann's Hill Road, Nottingham.
Photo: Michael Cubey

Entrance to the Oldknows Factory, St Ann's Hill Road, Nottingham.
Photo: Michael Cubey

The Oldknows building houses approximately 45 to 50 individual artists within four main studio groups:

- Oldknows Studios Group has 9 studios, with 10 artists currently using the spaces
- Egerton Studios has 9 studios and 13 artists
- Can Studios has 11 studios and 13 artists
- Opus Studios has 10 studios and 10 artists.[16]

In addition to the Oldknows factory studio groups, Nottingham has a good network of affordable studios including Nottingham Artists Group, Wollaton Studios, Reactor, Stand Assembly and a number of other independent groups.

Nottingham's studio groups are well networked through the ongoing open studios festivals (see section 4) and a very useful web portal: *'The site nottinghamstudios.org.uk represents one of the best current attempts to organise a city-wide community of artists – it's an object lesson in the benefits of smaller cities, and London-centrics would do well to consider how difficult this kind of organisation would be in the capital.'*[17]

There are few venues for exhibiting contemporary visual art in Nottingham. Three publicly-funded spaces, Angel Row Gallery, The Future Factory/ Bonington[18] (attached to Trent University) and the Djanogly Art Gallery at their Lakeside Arts Centre, in addition to the relatively recently opened, independent Surface Gallery and the artist run Moot, exhibit local as well as UK and international contemporary art.

'Nottingham has a very large community of arts practitioners across all of the art form areas ...This community is one of the city's arts strengths, however, there appear to be few support measures in place...'[19]

As has been the case elsewhere in the UK, this relative lack of opportunity to exhibit work and find audiences for their work, has meant artists have created their own opportunities and, to a large extent, helped to create, educate, and sustain local audiences for the contemporary visual arts in Nottingham.

> *"Although it is not always recognised, some of the artists at Oldknows and Egerton Studios are the bedrock of artist-led activity in Nottingham...they trail-blazed and laid the ground for much of the current activity by newer, currently higher profile artist groups."*[20]

Simon Withers and Denise Weston, in their studio at Oldknows Studio Group, May 2007. Photo: Michael Cubey

3.1 Oldknows Studio Group

Oldknows Studio Group is a non-profit making visual artists' collective. The group's main aim is to provide inexpensive and spacious studios for artists.

History

In 1987 a group of recent fine art graduates from Trent University took out a lease on the third floor of the Oldknows factory. At this time much of the building had been vacant for at least 12 years.

Oldknows Studio Group was the first studio organisation to establish itself in the factory building in St Ann's Hill Road. Subsequently, in 1989, Can Studios and Egerton Studios took up occupation on the fourth floor, followed by another group, Opus Studios, who took a lease on the second floor. A fifth group of artists and designers, ThingLand, has more recently taken a lease on an additional part of the building.

The building also houses a dance studio on the ground floor, which runs educational workshops with children and youth groups, a number of other cultural industries and a range of creative industry businesses. Most of these are more recent occupants.

Between 1987 and 1995 the group housed the Oldknows Gallery, the first artist-run, independent gallery space in Nottingham. The gallery exhibited local, UK and international artists and was involved in collaborative exchanges with other artist groups, such as the Transmission Gallery in Glasgow. The former gallery space now forms the studio space of two artists and is used as a base for artist initiated projects and public events.

After the gallery closed, the group has found new ways to promote the work of individual members and raise the profile of the studios, through open studios and other events. These have been largely the initiative of individual artists working within a group context, rather than being led by the organisation.

The organisation

Two studio-holders hold the lease on the building and the group is governed by a simple constitution[21] which is a working document for members enshrining the main operational procedures for the group and expectations of the studio-holders. One of the lease-holders acts as studio organiser, managing the studios in an unpaid capacity.

Studio of Chris Lewis Jones at Oldknows Studio Group, May 2007. Photo: Michael Cubey

The building has a lease on 3,000 square feet (280 square metres) on the third floor, which is divided into nine studio spaces. These are not self-contained, with no doorways between individual spaces, which the artists feel helps foster a sense of informal networking between studios, together with a sense that, although individuals have their own space, they are still part of a wider group.
The studios vary in size but average around 270 square feet (25 square metres), a size similar to that of the national average for a visual artist's studio.[22] The rents artists pay for their studios are low and below average for similar spaces in Nottingham.[23] Although the group receives no regular funding from any source, it does receive discretionary business rate relief from the local authority, which helps to keep the rents low.

Individual studio members are all practising visual artists who exhibit locally, nationally and internationally. (See individual artists' profiles in section 5).

Selection of new studio occupants is carried out by interview with the Oldknows Studio Group committee and by appraisal of the prospective artist's work. This is not to judge the style or type of work, but to ascertain the degree of commitment and experience an artist may bring to the studios, and to ensure their practice is appropriate to what are, essentially, very open-plan spaces.

The committee is concerned to ensure that the studios remain occupied by non-commercial visual artists. Also the group does not take on new graduates as it feels it is important for artists to come to the studios with some experience of working outside an academic context.

However, the group does wish to ensure that it attracts younger, emerging artists alongside more established ones, especially since the studios have a relatively low turnover. (With the exception of two, all the artists taking part in this case study had had studios for over ten years). There is no waiting list as such and studios are fully occupied. A major concern of founders and organisers is that studios are well used, and the group is currently reviewing its policies in this respect.

The amount of time artists spend in their studios varies. Given the 'portfolio' nature of their working lives the times when they visit their studios varies from week to week as well. The total time artists give to their art practice averages between 24 and 30 hours per week. Most of the artists travel only 10 to 30 minutes to get to the studios; almost half of those interviewed walk to the building.

The group holds annual open studios weekends. These are normally well attended with between 200 and 300 visitors over a three day period. In the last few years, the Open Studios has been part of a wider Nottingham Open Studios festival, which is looked at in more depth in section 4.

As an extension of the Open Studios, and as a means to both reach different audiences and explore more performance related art forms, Oldknows Studio Group has hosted two cabaret evenings, 'Cabaret Pink', one in the studio and one in another part of the factory building, which is used as a venue space by another organisation. This is covered in more detail in section 4.

Brief profiles of all the artists from Oldknows Studio Group who took part in this case study are included in section 5.

3.2 Egerton Studios

Egerton Studios is a non-profit making artists' group whose main aims are to provide studio space for artists and to promote art and artists.

History
Roughly the same size as Oldknows, Egerton Studios took on a lease for part of the fourth floor of the Oldknows factory in 1989. The current organiser, Paul Matosic, was attracted to the building by the *"bigger spaces and the sense that there was more of a community, due to the existence of the Oldknows Studio Group already in the building."*[24]

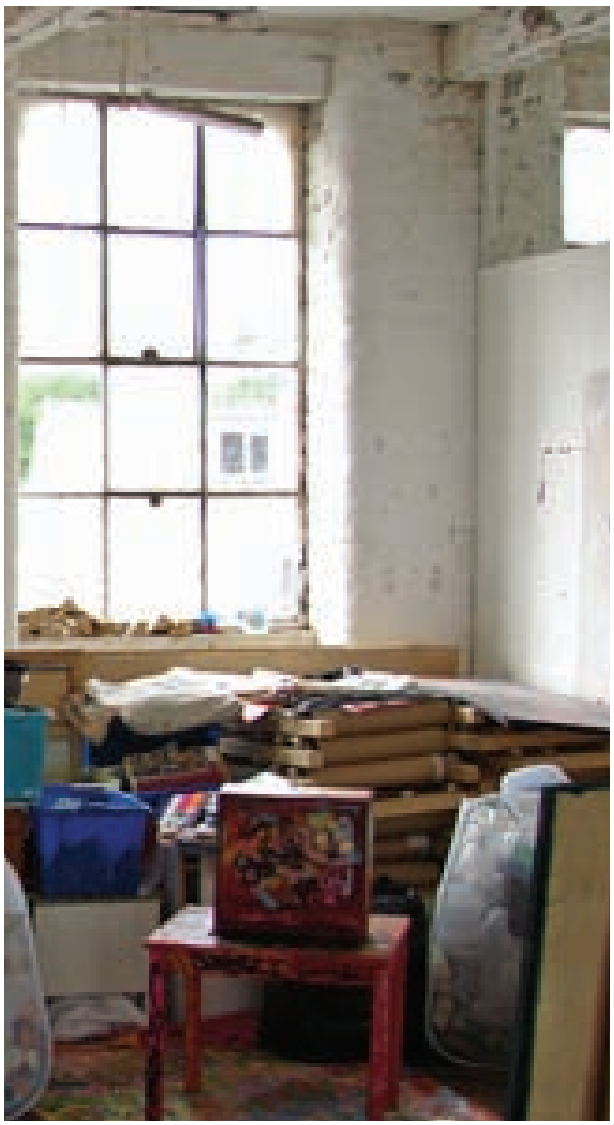
The organisation
Like Oldknows, Egerton Studios is an unincorporated group, with a set of simple rules. Paul Matosic is the studio organiser - an unpaid position. There are nine studio spaces with no doorways between the individual studio areas, but with sufficient privacy to work within.

The lease with the building's owner runs concurrently with those of the other studio groups in the building and the rents are similar. The group receives no funding, but does receive discretionary business rate relief from the local authority.

Turnover of artists is low, with one or two moving in and out each year. Selection of those seeking studio space is by interview. As with Oldknows, the studios are only offered to non-commercial visual artists, and all the spaces are fully occupied. Almost all of the artists travel only 10 to 30 minutes to get to the studios, and most walk to the building. Again, the time artists spend in their studios varies – on average between 15 and 30 hours per week.

Egerton also holds regular open studios weekends. As with Oldknows, these events are normally well attended with between 200 to 300 visitors over a three day period. (See section 4 for more information).

Paul Matosic and Shaun Belcher, in Paul's studio at Egerton Studios, May 2007.
Photo: Michael Cubey



Egerton Studios, May 2007. Photo: Michael Cubey

The group's organiser, Paul Matosic, and another artist in the studios, Shaun Belcher[25], planned to take on another space in the building and open this as a project and exhibition space. Lack of funding, and the overheads associated with taking on a permanent exhibition and project space prevented this from being realised. However, the concept of a project space as a vehicle for promoting artists and encouraging informed critical discussion has been taken on in a virtual, mainly web-based project space called 'Goldfactory'[26]. This will be supplemented by a small project space within Egerton Studios.

Brief profiles of all the artists from Egerton Studios who took part in this case study are included in section 5.

4 Creating public benefit – a review of the output of artists at Oldknows Studio Group and Egerton Studios

This section reviews the output and activity of six of the individual artists based at the Oldknows factory over a two year period and maps the extent of the public benefit produced, both direct and indirect. The artists are Simon Withers, Denise Weston and Chris Lewis Jones from Oldknows Studio Group and Paul Matosic, Mik Godley and Shaun Belcher from Egerton Studios.

The ability of small studio groups, such as these, to instigate and deliver projects of direct public benefit is clearly hampered by limited capacity and resources. In the majority of cases, the public benefit delivered through art projects is achieved, more often than not, in partnership with other organisations, which recognise and value the knowledge, expertise and values that visual artists can bring to a project. Larger studio organisations and, in particular, those registered as charities with educational objectives, are more equipped to instigate and deliver projects that create direct public benefit.[27]

In all cases, unless otherwise indicated, the events, exhibitions, workshops and projects listed in the following section were free of charge to members of the general public. Most artist-initiated art events and exhibitions tend to be free to participants or audiences. As visual artists as a sector are generally on low incomes, and visual artists are among the audience or beneficiaries for many events and exhibitions, it is very rare to find examples of such events being charged for.

> *"My career as a painter has been absolutely dominated by self-funded artistic research and development, supported by low-income part-time teaching in FE sector art schools – my practice is not in receipt of public funding. The bulk of my exhibitions are in public sector museums and galleries, usually unpaid – therefore I subsidise this sector from my income."*[28]

4.1 Creating *direct* public benefit – examples from the artists in this case study

Artistic outputs in the public domain

Artists show their work or make it available to audiences in a range of contexts, often for free. This can include taking part in 'open studios' ('exhibition' weekends where the public is invited in to see work in artists' studios); exhibitions, performances or screenings in galleries, museums, public spaces and other venues that are open to the public; art works on the internet and in the public realm.

Open Studios

'Open studios happen when a group of artists open their workplaces to the public during an agreed period of time ... Events have two main purposes: to promote artists by exhibiting and selling their work and to encourage a wider and larger audience for art.'[29]

Oldknows and Egerton have held open studios weekends regularly every year. From 1994, these became part of a much larger Nottingham open studios event, with artist Mik Godley central to the organisation of the 1994 Nottingham Open Studios event, organised as the You Are Here Festival, in collaboration with artist Paul Nix. Following the success of that year's event a group was established, NCAN (Nottingham Contemporary Artists Network)[30], which now organises all the open studios events in Nottingham, and pulls together the different studio groups and individual artists outside organised groups. Oldknows artist Chris Lewis Jones was co-founder of NCAN and has been Chair for the past three years.

The Open Studios have grown into a Nottingham Festival of Contemporary Visual Art, bringing together open studios, exhibitions, workshops, tours and cabaret events.

> *"NCAN has succeeded in bringing visual artists together better than any other previous initiative. And it grew directly out of the studio organisations and the artists."*[31]

Open studios events at Oldknows had around 150 visitors in 2004 and 350 visitors in 2005. The artists and organisers at Oldknows were aware that numbers could have been improved, although with limited financial resources this was difficult to achieve. They felt, however, that the experience was always a positive one for the visiting public and for the artists:

> *"People are often amazed at the volume, range and intensity of work at the Oldknows open studios – amazed that it happens at all – and amazed that nobody seems to know about it."*[32]

> *"Visitors to the studios always comment on how wonderful the Oldknows spaces are, how rich the diversity of the work being produced is and on the general spirit of the group."*[33]

'The artists involved in organising the open studios did a good job with the limited resources available to them.'[34]

Chris Lewis Jones performance, Open Festival 2006. Oldknows Open Studios.
Photo: Chris Lewis Jones

'Milch' performance, Cabaret Pink, Oldknows Open Studios. Photo: Denise Weston

The 2006 Open Studios Festival held 24 events with over 100 artists and artists groups involved and showing work. An estimated 400 visitors attended the Oldknows and Egerton Open Studios. An evaluation by Lizzie Haines[35] found that 95% of audiences found the events 'good or very good', 99% said they would attend further Open events, and 83% found out new things about artistic activity in the city.

Cabaret Pink – performance events

Cabaret Pink grew out of the Open Studios and festivals such as You Are Here and a desire to extend the range of art that could be accommodated in an open studios environment. Instigated and led by Simon Withers, Denise Weston and Chris Lewis Jones, the project aimed to create a different context for the work they were producing, work that could not be presented within the open studios or a gallery context. The desire was also to extend the range of audiences who would normally come to open studios events.

The first Cabaret Pink event comprised visual art, performance art, poetry, and live music. Held in October 2005 in Simon and Denise's shared studio space, the event was free and achieved an audience of 126. The response from those attending was "great", and a second Cabaret Pink took place in November 2006. With funding, the artists hired a larger venue in the Oldknows factory (the 'Fame Factory') and charged £5 entry. Attendance for this event was only 37. Feedback suggests that it was very much the context of the artists' studio as venue, as well as being a free event, that made the first cabaret more successful. This reinforces the view that the context of seeing work in a 'different' space is an additional benefit that open studios events create.

Individual artists: exhibitions, screenings, commissions, public art and curated projects in the public domain (in the last two years).

The following activities demonstrate the extent to which individual artists in the Oldknows and Egerton studios place their work in a range of contexts for the benefit of the public.

Simon Withers: painter, Oldknows Studio Group

2007 *Parade,* two exhibitions - *Out of Place* and *Terra Incognita,* January to March, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham
2006 *yes I said yes I will yes,* group exhibition, 1851 Gallery, Nottingham Trent University
2006 Open studios event, Oldknows Studios. Visitors 200+
2005 Open studios event, Oldknows Studios. Visitors 200+

Denise Weston: painter, Oldknows Studio Group

2006 Open studios event, Oldknows Studios. Visitors 200+
2006 Cabaret Pink, musical performance with Milch, jazz based trio, July, Fame Factory, Oldknows factory, Nottingham. Audience 37
2006 *yes I said yes I will yes*, group exhibition, 1851 Gallery, Nottingham Trent University. Audience 2000+
2005 Open studios event, Oldknows Studios. Visitors 200+
Cabaret event linked to open studios event, performed with the band Milch. Audience 127
2005 *Fabrication*, solo show (part of city-wide event linked with Nottingham Castle), 1851 Gallery, Nottingham Trent University. Audience 2000+

2005 Lecture linked to exhibition of Nottingham Trent University students (2nd year fashion students on a Fine Art module). Audience 40

Chris Lewis Jones: visual artist, Oldknows Studio Group

Exhibitions

2007 *North and South,* Millais Gallery, Hansard Gallery, City Gallery, Southampton
Northern Centre for Contemporary Art, Sunderland
Reg Vardy Gallery, Sunderland
Durban House Gallery, Nottingham

2006 Surface Gallery, Nottingham
Lace Market Photography Gallery, Nottingham
Cornerhouse, Manchester
Nottingham Castle Gallery
Open studios event, Oldknows Studios. Visitors 200+

2005 Djanogly Gallery, Nottingham
Cornerhouse, Manchester
Open studios event, Oldknows Studios
Yard Gallery, Nottingham

Performances

2007 Brew House Yard, Nottingham

2006 *Jammin J*, Fame Factory, Nottingham, Lace Market Photography Gallery, Nottingham

2005 *Searching 4 Albion*, Tate Modern, London

2005 *Mere Jelly*, Oldknows Studios, Nottingham

Screenings

Searching 4 Albion, City Arts, Nottingham, Oldknows Studios, Nottingham

Paul Matosic: visual artist, mainly in film and installation, Egerton Studios

Exhibitions

2007 *A+B=CC(AN)*, solo exhibition, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham
Mapping, Bury Art Gallery, Bury
Stuff Happens, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham
Out of Place, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham
As if one was not Enough, 20-21 Gallery, Scunthorpe
Talking Points, solo exhibition, Cooper Gallery, Barnsley

2006 *Round One Way*, Independents, Liverpool Biennial
Typo, The Gallery NCN, Nottingham
yes I said yes I will yes, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University
Multipli City, Context Gallery, Londonderry
Ex Industria, CAFKA, Kitchener, Ontario

2006 *Lost*, interactive web-based map, Cooper Gallery, Barnsley, http://www.matosic.org.uk/barnsley/

Curating

2006 *yes I said yes I will yes*, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University

Shaun Belcher: visual artist, recently left Egerton Studios

2005 Open studios event, Egerton Studios

2006 *Paint & Print*, Harding House Gallery, Lincoln

2006 *Typo,* group show, Goldfactory, New College, Nottingham

Mik Godley: painter, Egerton Studios

Solo exhibitions

2007 *Considering Silesia,* showing a substantial body of work from the project, Bend in the River Gallery, Gainsborough

Group exhibitions

2007 Joint exhibition with Henry Tietzsch-Tyler to accompany the Department of German conference *From Perpetrators to Victims? Constructions and Representations of German Wartime Suffering,* June to July, University of Leeds, School of Design

2007 *Parade – Terra Incognita*, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, curated by Indra Khanna (Autograph ABP, London). Audience 2,610

2007 *The Redemptive Beauty of Life After Death,* Bonington Gallery, Nottingham Trent University, curated by Michael Forbes (The New Art Exchange, Nottingham). Audience 2016

2006 *When Men and Mountains Meet,* Gallery 01, Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, Croatia, curated by Helen Jones, Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham

2006 Open studios event, Nottingham

2006 *yes I said yes I will yes,* 1851 Gallery and Bonington Gallery (Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University)

2006 *Drawingspace*, Southwell Artspace, Southwell

Access to creative opportunities

In the examples that follow, we see how artists create direct public benefit through involvement in creative projects and activities with various groups, developed out of partnerships with a range of agencies and through which they create access to creative opportunities for diverse participants.

Chris Lewis Jones

i.d.4.me, 2006 - working with refugees and asylum seekers
Working with recent asylum seekers and refugees, the project comprised a series of workshops over a four month period using music and visual arts to explore English, Congolese, Iraqi, Kurdish, Yemeni and Ethiopian cultural identities. The project was delivered in partnership with Mat Anderson from arts organisation SambaWamba and the Nottingham Refugee Forum, and was funded by Arts Council England, East Midlands.

Initially based at City Arts, Nottingham, the workshops moved to take place in Chris' studio, as "*we needed to make more mess than we could do at the City Arts location*." Chris describes 'i.d.4me' as one of the:

> *"best participatory projects I have ever done...it was hard work, for all of us, but there was a shred of understanding that we were going to be serious about the art we were making, and I think that is the difference when working with professional practising artists, that the process is more engaging and demanding, it is not art as relaxation...the project was all about identity, and so it related directly to my own current studio practice."*[36]

In addition to these projects, Chris gives on average four talks and workshops in his studio every year, mainly with school groups, with around 20 to 30 pupils for every visit.

Shaun Belcher

Framework City Academy 'drugs' project
Working with drug and alcohol recovery participants, Shaun led a project that utilised recovery experience to assemble a collage artwork reflecting the users'

Framework City Academy 'drugs' project

experience. The project included creative writing and image manipulation as well as construction skills and the final artwork was exhibited at Waterstones Gallery in September 2006.

> *"In sole lead artist role...managed to create a high impact art project that gained a good deal of press coverage and out of which three participants gained a great deal of personal satisfaction and pride in completing."*[37]

Framework Housing Academy, digital imaging & film
Shaun led a series of workshops using digital imaging (*Mansfield* project) and film (*Newark* project), working with the Framework Housing Academy, Nottinghamshire's leading provider of housing to homeless and vulnerable people.

Participants used digital video and cameras to capture local scenes, and then edited the results into a large collage and a music video.

'Mansfield' 5 x 8 Collage. Photo: Shaun Belcher

Double Vision Arts Project sound and vision workshops
Shaun created a website for the organisation Double Impact[38], to document and present this project, and delivered a series of workshops using mainly creative writing and digital video skills, working with recovering drug and alcohol users.

"The benefits have been numerous, the benefits to people's self esteem have been very noticeable. People really want this experience; they want the ability and the chance to learn creative skills.

We have always used professional artists to deliver the workshops because we want the experience to be high quality...practising, professional artists bring a wealth of experience, and for the people participating in our workshops that is important, it is a change from working with health professionals, the artist bring a different and valuable experience to what we do."[39]

Inside Out, prison workshops
Shaun has led workshops as part of Inside Out, an ongoing project bringing creative writing workshops to prisoners in Sherwood Prison, Nottingham, and Whatton Prison, funded by Nottingham City Council Library Services and Arts Council England. An annual exhibition of the work produced takes place at Nottingham Central Library and is accompanied by two publications.[40]

"It has been a challenging but very rewarding experience...prisoners are pushing their boundaries and not 'coasting'. ...has produced public exhibitions and publications including art and writing of work. It is a very worthwhile and satisfying project that is sadly under-funded although high in 'outcomes'."[41]

Paul Matosic

Reclaim residency, The Playhouse, Londonderry 2006
Paul undertook workshops in numerous schools in and around Londonderry as part of a residency with the Playhouse.

"The Londonderry workshops were set up through the Playhouse Londonderry as part of the Reclaim residency. Basically I went to about eight schools with a van full of stuff from the Scrapstore and a number of glue guns, we then proceeded to create huge collages out of the stuff. I encouraged them to think about fragments of letters rather than full letters, we did loads of design work on paper first."[42]

'Double Vision' workshop. Photo: Shaun Belcher

Gallery and other education projects

Many artists give talks or tours or deliver participatory sessions within galleries, or in conjunction with a gallery programme. Such programmes aim to reach out to new audiences for a gallery's programme, to deepen understanding of the work on show, or to provide opportunities for debate or creative expression through artist-led discussion or practical work. A range of examples follow.

Simon Withers

2007 *Parade* Studio Tour – Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham.
2005 The Angel Row Gallery instigated project *Interknit Café*'.

> *"The feedback was really good, it was a very popular event, and with a very interesting range of different age groups attending... Simon is one of those people who are always willing to try new things. He always gives 100% of himself to the projects he is involved in, and keeps his ideas very fresh."*[43]

2005 Informal workshop for the exhibition (dis)comfort, Angel Row Gallery. 15 participants involved. *yes I said yes I will yes* – in conversation. Seminar on Cyril Seaton, Nottingham Contemporary Artists Network.

Denise Weston

2006 In conversation – discussion between artists for *yes I said yes I will yes*. Group exhibition, 1851 Gallery, Nottingham Trent University. Estimated audience 45.
2005 *Fabrication*, solo show (part of city-wide event linked with Nottingham Castle), 1851 Gallery, Nottingham Trent University. Lecture linked to exhibition to Nottingham Trent University students. (2nd year fashion students on a Fine Art module). Audience 45.

Paul Matosic

2006 Chicago week architecture workshops, Gallery 37, Birmingham. Reclaimed materials residency, The Playhouse. Londonderry.

Mik Godley

2007 *Parade* Studio Tour – Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham. Southwell Artspace in conjunction with *Accelerator* (Angel Row Gallery). presentation on Artists' Studios Developments in Nottingham. The Djanogly Art Gallery, University of Nottingham, occasional workshops for adults, groups of 16, a small fee charged (subsidised by charitable funding), organised by the gallery.

Artists working in formal education

Artists make a substantial contribution to formal education, at a strategic and delivery level, in schools and in further and higher education. They lead creative projects which develop individual expression and raise standards of pupil attainment, teach in further and higher education and contribute to the curriculum in a wide variety of ways. Many of the artists of Oldknows Studio Group and Egerton Studios take part in this range of activities.

'A+B=CC(an)', 2007 Paul Matosic

Urban found objects. 725cm x 455cm
Installation exploring cartographical references and regeneration, Bonington Gallery, Nottingham, April 2007.
Photo: Paul Matosic

"...(the artists) contribute an enormous amount to the education sector...either through workshops in a gallery or school context, or teaching at school, FE or HE level. And you can't teach effectively about art if you are not practising it."[44]

Mik Godley

Workshops for AS level art students, Lincolnshire School Improvement Service
A series of art workshops aimed at raising standards of attainment, organised by the agency (a privatised service of Lincolnshire County Council) and delivered by Mik Godley in Lincolnshire schools.

"I am able to earn a living in the public sphere because of the physical and intellectual engagement with the discourse of fine art that my studio practice represents...I am able to do a good job in the work I do with children and adults – the passion, zeal and commitment would not be there without the studio."[45]

Mural Workshops Residency - Elliot Durham School, Nottingham, 2005 and Holly Girt private girls school Nottingham, 2005.

"Both the Holly Girt and Elliot Durham workshops were based on the very simple notion of maps with the school at the centre, with each child depicting their route to school and then transposing this onto the larger work.

In the Holly Girt workshop, I was able to spend plenty of time talking about maps and scale - one exercise being to draw a one-to-one scale map of where you are on an A4 sheet of paper. (Go on have a go!).

At the Elliot Durham school I spent about six half days working in the school, enlarging the map onto an 8'x8' board with each child painting a section, and then I depicted routes all over it."[46]

Simon Withers

Part -time teaching, South Nottinghamshire College of Further Education.

Denise Weston

Part-time lecturer, on Level 1 and Level 2 undergraduate modules of BA Fine Art degree, University of Nottingham, (Dept. of Arts & Humanities), 2006 onwards
Part-time lecturer, University of Nottingham, School of Education, (open studies courses).
Fractional post held at New College, Nottingham since 2005.
(Taught on Foundation, PT foundation, National Diploma 3D design (Visual Studies Tutor). Currently teaching on Applied Art & Design 'A' level (Double Award)
Part-time lecturer, New College, Nottingham (teaching as above), 2002-05.

Chris Lewis Jones

Visiting lecturer, 2005-06, University of Derby.

Mik Godley

Chesterfield College, Foundation Art & Design, Lecturer 0.4 Fine Art.
Nottingham Trent University, BA Hons Theatre Design, Visiting Lecturer, Drawing.

Shaun Belcher

2006 Fine Art tutor, Landau Forte College, Derby.
2005 Multimedia Arts tutor, West Nottingham College.

Paul Matosic

Occasional part-time adult education at Nottingham University.

4.2 Creating *indirect* public benefit

Artists create indirect public benefit through their practice as artists, educators, researchers and consultants in a range of contexts.

Facilitation, consultancy and support structures

This refers to artists' involvement in steering groups, selection panels, and other voluntary work. Many artists bring their experience, knowledge and skills to the benefit of public consultation and debate, through their involvement in local and national steering groups on cultural policy issues, selecting work for public galleries, mentoring with other cultural groups, and other voluntary work involving their knowledge and expertise.

Selection panels
Sideshow was an independent, artist-led project that ran alongside the Nottingham showing of the major touring exhibition British Art Show 2006 (BAS6).[47] Simon Withers and Paul Matosic were artists on the selection panel for the *SideShow* exhibitions and events throughout Nottingham.

'The best art at the Bonington Gallery is actually taking place just outside the doors of BAS6. Paintings and sculpture by six Nottingham artists, Mik Godley, Michael Forbes, Denise Weston, Elshaday Berhane, Simon Withers and Paul Matosic - all rejected by the official BAS6 fringe. Sideshow - speaks volumes about the wealth of native talent in Nottingham and the rather empty and frivolous nature of much of British Art Show 6.'[48]

> *"We all have our own agendas...but we never feel we are competing with each other, there has always been a willingness to work together to provide the best of cultural experiences in Nottingham."*[49]

Steering groups
Nottingham Studios Consortium: three artists from Oldknows Studio Group (Simon Withers) and Egerton Studios (Paul Matosic and Mik Godley) have been involved in the steering group for the Nottingham Studios Consortium[50], a project that has been set up to create a new £8 million, purpose-built studios, workshops and gallery complex in Nottingham, designed by award-winning architect David Adjaye, facilitated by ArtReach consultants and supported by Arts Council England, East Midlands, New Deal for Communities and The New Art Exchange.

The importance of involving *practising* visual artists in a project such as this is integral to its success, especially those with experience of running studios, of their practical needs and the difficulties facing artists. There are already concerns about the issue of affordability with the planned project, and the voice of those artists involved in the consortium will be critical at that level, to ensure the credibility of the project.

Critical practice and creative networks

Artists at Oldknows are involved in creative networks, through which they share their knowledge and expertise, take part in critical debate, provide peer support and support to less established artists. They also represent their areas and regions at conferences and events in the UK and overseas.

Mik Godley

2006 Nottingham Studios representative/ delegate on EUCLID/Arts Council England seminar *The Future of Creative Workspaces*.
2005 April/May: presented talks to the joint Arts Council England, East Midlands / ArtReach Consultants *Open Studios and Artist Workspaces Regional Workshop Days* in venues in Nottingham, Leicester and Wellingborough, as representative of Nottingham Studios.
2005 UK visual artists' delegate to UNIMEI European artists conference in Amsterdam, *Why artists are poor,* supported by NAN bursary from a-n Magazine.

Paul Matosic and Shaun Belcher, in Paul's studio at Egerton Studios, May 2007. Photo: Michael Cubey

2005 Nottingham Studios delegate on Arts Council England, East Midlands, Capital Networks travelling European Research Conference on new contemporary art venues and museums – Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France; SMAK, Ghent, Belgium; ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany.

The Goldfactory

Established and run by Paul Matosic, Shaun Belcher and Mik Godley of Egerton Studios, Goldfactory[51] is a site for criticism, news, promotion and debate.

GF goldfactory
CONTEMPORARY ART NOTTINGHAM

'*A new contemporary art organisation, located in Nottingham, UK, which looks beyond borders, beyond the narrow confines of the ordinary to bring cutting edge artists and the public together...Goldfactory is developing new ways of getting art and the public to interact via gallery based and 'virtual' exhibitions and educational development. It is now recognised that although there are numerous visual artists working in Nottingham that curating exhibitions with a wider international input as well is advantageous for all involved.*'

Goldfactory is supported with a research and development grant from Arts Council England, East Midlands and receives additional support from East Midlands Arts and Business, Arts Training Central, Nottingham Trent University (NTU), tanc[52] and Greater Nottingham Partnerships. Curatorial mentoring is provided by curator Stella Couloutbanis of NTU's Future Factory and the Centre for Contemporary Art Nottingham (CCAN).

Whilst Goldfactory aims, in the same way that open studios events do, to support and promote the work of individual artists and to create a wider audience and informed critical public for the work of those artists, it seeks also to address some of the limitations that Shaun and Paul feel open studios have, and their desire to see a livelier critical debate about the visual arts in Nottingham and beyond. A small project/office space will be created at Egerton Studios to run Goldfactory.

GOLD Factory, the new Nottingham-born exhibition platform for mid-career artists, has been going through ructions of late.

But its second show proper, Typo, has followed on apparently seamlessly after the launch exhibition featuring Zenon Gradkowski. It is a small exhibition and a kind of extension of the first show, also shown here. This second show also features two text-heavy graphic works by Gradkowski, but three other local artists have been added: Shaun Belcher, Paul Matosic and Stephen Butler.

The unifying theme is that all those involved are showing art which incorporates text, words, language, what have you, in some way. Matosic, one of the co-founders of Gold Factory, brings to the party four digital prints in which words are partly obscured. Butler, on the other hand, presents frames containing objects that look like encrusted dried marine specimens, accompanied by obscure letters and symbols. Is it Elvish? Or the full alphabet devised by Led Zeppelin for *Led Zep IV*? Belcher is different again, here showing rough cartoons whose hero is Moogee the Art Dog, wandering through the minefield of the contemporary art establishment. The cartoons are openly hostile rather than merely satirical, the tickboxy culture brutally castigated by Belcher's spleen probably deserving such a good savaging.

TEXT MESSAGE

■ **Typo, New College Nottingham, Stoney Street, Lace Market, until October 25.**

MARK PATTERSON

Review of 'TYPO'. Image from Goldfactory website

Functioning primarily through the website, Goldfactory has produced two exhibitions to date: the first featuring the work of Egerton artist, Zenon Gradkowski, curated by Paul Matosic; and the second, a group show curated by Shaun Belcher. There are plans for more.

Unlike some non studio-based initiatives, Goldfactory is not claiming the 'digital death' of the studio-based artists' practice, but is continuing a tradition of visual artists creating new opportunities, contexts and audiences for their work, and a critical framework around artists' practice in the absence of other support structures.

Mik Godley in his studio, Egerton Studios.
Photo: Graham Lester George

Residencies and research projects

A studio, and an artist's practice, involves research and development, thinking and experimentation, as much as production. Artists contribute to wider cultural research and share this through direct involvement in residencies hosted in cultural and other institutions.

Chris Lewis Jones

2006 Arts NK – Artscape (Metheringham) research into local identity and the extent to which this frames, limits and/or precipitates aspirations for public art.

2005-06 Creative Partnerships Nottingham, an exploration of the extent to which the artist's practice informs his/her work within educational contexts.

Mik Godley

2007-08 *Considering Silesia*, collaboration with Professor Bill Niven and the Public History and Heritage MA of the History, Heritage and Geography Department at Nottingham Trent University, a joint, interdisciplinary research-and-practice project relating to the legacy of National Socialism and the expulsion of ethnic Germans from Silesia after World War Two, leading towards a cohesive exhibition and book.

2007 Awarded Future Factory Fellowship (School of Art & Design, Nottingham Trent University) to create *Exploring the Virtual Silesian 'Urwald'*, ten paintings for the project *Considering Silesia*.

2005-06 Invited to develop the project *Considering Silesia* on the inaugural European Union funded two-year Masters research degree programme Creative Collaborations, a partnership between the School of Art and Design of Nottingham Trent University and the Broadway Cinema Media Centre. Completed December 2006 with the result of Pass with Distinction, tutors Frank Abbott (course leader, NTU) and Jim Shorthose (Broadway).

2006 Collaborating with Lisa Urwin (Future Factory, NTU) on a freelance basis as project manager to *Considering Silesia* research and development programme for touring exhibition: UK, Germany and Poland.

Bibliographies

Printed articles, catalogues and criticism of artists' work contributes to the sharing of cultural knowledge and thought in the public domain.

Simon Withers

Parade, Angel Row Gallery, 2007

Room 17, Considering Venus, 2007, artist's 20 page booklet produced for *out of place*. Copy held in the Rokeby Venus Dossier, National Gallery, London

Seaton, Rex Barker & Cabaret Pink, Nonesuch, 2006

yes I said yes I will yes, exhibition catalogue, 2006

Chris Lewis Jones

Seaton, Rex Barker & Cabaret Pink, Nonesuch, 2006

Paul Matosic

Arts and Business, publicity catalogue, 2006

yes I said yes I will yes, exhibition catalogue, 2006

Mik Godley

a-n Magazine, March 2007 and June 2007.

Untitled, review by Peter Suchin, June 2007.

5 Brief profiles of the artists

Oldknows Studio Group artists

Simon Withers

Simon is a visual artist working in a variety of media, primarily painting. He has a BA in Fine Art from Sheffield Polytechnic. He has exhibited widely locally, in the UK and internationally and has taught and been involved in education workshops in public galleries. Simon has taken part in artist selection panels for public exhibitions and for other studio groups and has curated exhibitions in Nottingham and elsewhere in the UK. A member of the Nottingham Studios Consortium, Simon has been one of the key organisers of open studio and Cabaret events at Oldknows Studios. He also is a musician, and plays with Denise Weston in the jazz band Milch. The main studio organiser for Oldknows Studio Group, he has had a studio there since 1995.

Making Multifolds, 2006.
Photo: Simon Withers

Chris Lewis Jones

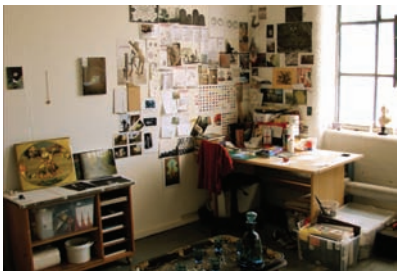
Chris is a visual artist working in a variety of media who has an MA in Art and Design from Derby University. He has exhibited widely locally and in the UK, including live performances and his work is held in public and private collections. Chris has produced a number of public art commissions, has curated several exhibitions in Nottingham, and has been involved in a wide range of residencies and education workshops with a variety of age and cultural groups. He is widely involved in several local arts and community networks and is Chair of NCAN (Nottingham Contemporary Artists Network), which organises Nottingham-wide open studios events. Currently Chair of Oldknows Studio group, he has had a studio at Oldknows since 2003.

'Albion' Chris Lewis Jones
Photo: Chris Lewis Jones

'Sister, Daughter, Mother, Wife'.
Photo: Denise Weston

Denise Weston

Denise is a painter with a BA in Fine Art from Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham and an MA in Fine Art from Birmingham Polytechnic. She has exhibited widely locally, in the UK and internationally and her work is held in public and private collections. She has also curated exhibitions in Nottingham and elsewhere in the UK. Denise has taught widely and currently lectures in fine art at the University of Nottingham and the New College, Nottingham. She has been one of the key organisers of open studios and Cabaret events at Oldknows Studios and is also a musician, playing with Simon Withers in the jazz band Milch. A founder member of the group, she has had a studio at Oldknows since 1987 and, with Simon Withers and Chris Lewis Jones, is on the committee of volunteers running the studios.

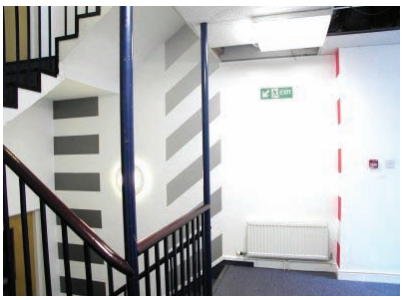


Thomas Wright's Oldknows studio.
Photo: Michael Cubey

Thomas Wright

Thomas is a painter with a BA in Fine Art from John Moores University, Liverpool, and a post-graduate diploma in Fine Art from Goldsmiths College, London. He has taught in higher education and, last year, curated an exhibition at the Surface Gallery of contemporary painting. Thomas has had a studio at Oldknows since 2006.

Gillian Ross Kelsey's Oldknows studio. Photo: Michael Cubey



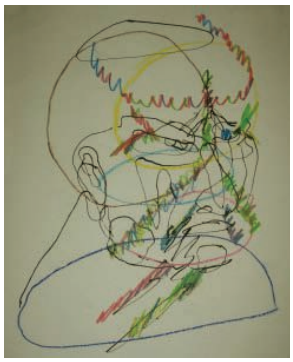
Sheila Ravnkilde installation, Arts Council England, East Midlands new offices, 2003. Photo: Sheila Ravnkilde

Gillian Ross Kelsey

Gillian is a painter with an MA in Fine Art from Nottingham Trent University and has work in public and private collections. She has taught in higher education and, in the last three years, has run an art class in her local village for older local people, sometimes bringing groups to visit contemporary exhibitions in Nottingham and the Oldknows open studios exhibitions. Gillian has had a studio at Oldknows since 1992.

Rob Van Beek

Rob is a visual artist working in a variety of media with a BA in Fine Art from Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham. As well as making art, he teaches and is involved in a number of community art initiatives, including an arts development group that instigates and supports networks of art activity with the mental health sector in Nottingham. Rob has had a studio at Oldknows (and Egerton) since 1990.



Rob Van Beek, ' Head Drawing'. Photo: Rob Van Beek

Sheila Ravnkilde
Sheila moved out of Oldknows Studios a month before this case study to a new studio in Harrington Mills Studios in Long Eaton. A painter with an MA in Fine Art from Nottingham Trent University, she has recently concentrated on large-scale colour installations painted directly onto walls. She teaches at the University of Nottingham, School of Continuing Education, Visual Arts, and has taught in secondary schools and run numerous art workshops with children. Sheila has exhibited in Nottingham, the UK and internationally and her work is held in public and private collections. She had had a studio at Oldknows from 1997.

Other artists at Oldknows Studio group are listed below. They were not able to participate in this case study.

Stephen Craighill

Stephen is a visual artist with a BA in Fine Art from Nottingham Trent Polytechnic, who works in a range of media. He has exhibited widely in the UK.

Neil Feldman

Neil is a painter who has had studio at Oldknows since 1996. His work is held in public and private collections.

Jenny Warren

Jenny is a painter with a BA in Fine Art from Loughborough University. She has shown locally in group exhibitions

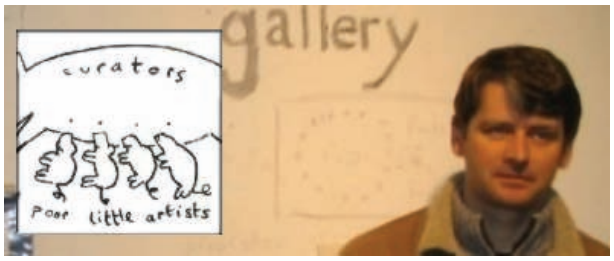
Egerton Studios artists

Paul Matosic

Paul is a visual artist working mainly in installation and film. He has an MA in Fine Art, and an MA in Creative Collaborations from Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham. Paul has exhibited and had film screenings locally, in the UK and internationally and his work is held in public and private collections. He has curated a number

Paul Matosic in his studio at Egerton Studios, Photo: Paul Matosic

of exhibitions in Nottingham over the last few years, is a member of the Nottingham Studios Consortium and developed the Goldfactory project in collaboration with Shaun Belcher. [53] Paul has been involved in a wide range of public art projects in the UK, has taught in further and higher education and has been involved in a wide range of residencies and workshops in the UK and internationally, working with children, adults and elderly people. Based in Egerton Studios since 1991, Paul is the studio organiser and the main organiser for the group on events such as Open Studios.



Shaun Belcher and cartoon. Photo: Shaun Belcher

Shaun Belcher

Shaun left Egerton Studios recently, but previously had a studio there for two years. He is a painter but, more recently, has focused on web-based work, and an ongoing series of cartoons, described as *"openly hostile rather than merely satirical."* [54] Shaun has a BA in Fine Art from Middlesex Polytechnic, London and has exhibited in Nottingham and London. He has taught fine art and digital art practice at further education level, has been artist in residence at a primary school and, in the past three years, has delivered arts workshops with pensioners, prisoners and drug users.

Recently, Shaun has focused on community-focused arts development through workshops and websites. As Moogee the Art Dog[55], Shaun writes comment and criticism on the local and UK visual arts scene and, in collaboration with Paul Matosic, he has developed the Goldfactory project. Shaun is also a musician and has released a number of recordings as Trailer Star project.

Mik Godley

Mik is a painter with a BA in Fine Art from Leeds Polytechnic. He has exhibited widely locally, in the UK and internationally and his work is held in public and private collections. He lectures in fine art at Chesterfield College and at Nottingham Trent University as a visiting lecturer and has been a member of artist selection panels for public exhibitions. Mik has delivered art

Mik Godley in his studio, Egerton Studios.
Photo: Graham Lester George

workshops to a range of age groups and has been involved in residencies, workshops and research projects in the UK and internationally. A member of the Nottingham Studios Consortium, he has been centrally involved in raising the profile of Open Studios in Nottingham. Mik has had a studio at Egerton Studios since 1991.

Zenon Gradkowski

Zenon is a painter with a BA in Fine Art from Loughborough University. He exhibits regularly, mainly in Nottingham and has worked as a teaching assistant with 12 to16 year olds. Zenon has had a studio at Egerton Studios since 2000.

Zenon Gradkowski in his studio, Egerton Studios. Photo: Paul Matosic

Other artists at Egerton Studios are listed below. They were not able to participate in this case study.

Liza Aspinell
Pete Barber
Helen Entwistle
Flavia Olivares
David Questa

6 Is there a future?

2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the Oldknows Studios Group. The future of the building as a centre for visual arts production and creative networks, and as a base for the artists' studio groups located in the Oldknows Factory, is currently in considerable doubt as the leases the studio groups hold on the building will run out in less than two years' time. Whilst the artists are involved in negotiations to try and secure a further lease, the outcome of those discussions is uncertain.

Artists taking part in this case study were asked: "What would the impact on you and your art practice be if you did not have your studio?" the responses were:

"No research, no development, no practice."
(Mik Godley)

"The nature of my work would drastically change. It is likely that all my previous artworks would have to be destroyed. I would have to find various other spaces to meet my needs, in all likelihood these would be considerably more expensive to hire and I would use a great deal more of my time moving between locations."
(Simon Withers)

"Pretty devastating. I do not have space within a domestic environment to produce work at the scale I do at the present time. Storage of work would be very problematical and work would have to be destroyed."
(Denise Weston)

"I am able to earn a living in the public sphere because of the physical and intellectual engagement with the discourse of fine art that my studio practice represents...I am able to do a good job in the work I do with children and adults – the passion zeal and commitment would not be there without the studio."
(Chris Lewis Jones)

"I would be able to survive but in a very limited way, my practice would have to change and my home would become full of studio fallout."
(Paul Matosic)

"I left the studio recently...it has meant I am no longer able to do large scale or 'dirty work'."
(Shaun Belcher)

Asked the question "What would the impact be on the professional, personal and community links listed above if you did not have your studio?" the responses were:

"Unable to function."
(Mik Godley)

"The studio provides a single contact point for many artists. On many occasions community groups and organisations contact artists through the studios because of our local profile. Meaningful employment for the artist will sometimes be the outcome from the communication."
(Simon Withers)

"Personally, having lectured part-time for 18 years, I think the effect on my own input into that specific area would be diminished. As someone who always enjoyed and benefited from the role of visiting and part-time tutors as a student, I feel I can understand the role that a practising artist can play in art education.

At the moment, in particular, with my university work, I find that both situations of making work and teaching are quite closely linked. As well as hopefully being beneficial to students, I find the work forces me to keep thinking about the production of my own work, both conceptually and in terms of practical 'skills'."
(Denise Weston)

"I would not want to see that happen! All the goodwill, collaboration that takes place, all the exciting work that is done outside the gallery walls would disappear...the whole of the Nottingham cultural scene would be very different."

(Stella Couloutbanis, Exhibition, Events and Festival Manager, Future Factory, Bonington Gallery)

The examples and quotations in this case study demonstrate the considerable public benefit groups and organisations such as Oldknows Studio Group and Egerton Studios deliver, and the vital relationship between having an affordable studio and the artists' ability to maintain this level of activity and output.

2007 marks the 20th anniversary of the Oldknows Studio group and the 19th for Egerton Studios. Despite this longevity, the groups remain vulnerable. If these artists lose their spaces, not only will they face a serious disruption to their practice, but the public benefit that the groups create may cease altogether.

Appendix 1 – Individuals and groups consulted

I would like to thank all the individuals below, for giving their time to talk to me and especially the artists for taking the time to complete fairly long and detailed questionnaires, and for responding in such a short space of time.

Studio organisers

Oldknows Studio Group
Denise Weston
Simon Withers

Egerton Studios
Paul Matosic

Artists

Oldknows Studio Group
Chris Lewis Jones
Sheila Ravnkilde
Gillian Ross Kelsey
Rob van Beek
Denise Weston
Simon Withers
Thomas Wright

Egerton Studios
Shaun Belcher
Mik Godley
Zenon Gradkowski
Paul Matosic

Others

Mary Chambers
Haydn Primary School, Creative Partnerships Co-ordinator.

Stella Couloutbanis
FutureFactory (Bonington Gallery, School of Art and Design, Nottingham Trent University).

Deborah Dean
Visual Arts and Exhibitions Manager, Angel Row Gallery.

Naomi Dines
Artist and Chair of the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers, for her interpretation of the ways through which artists create direct and indirect public benefit.

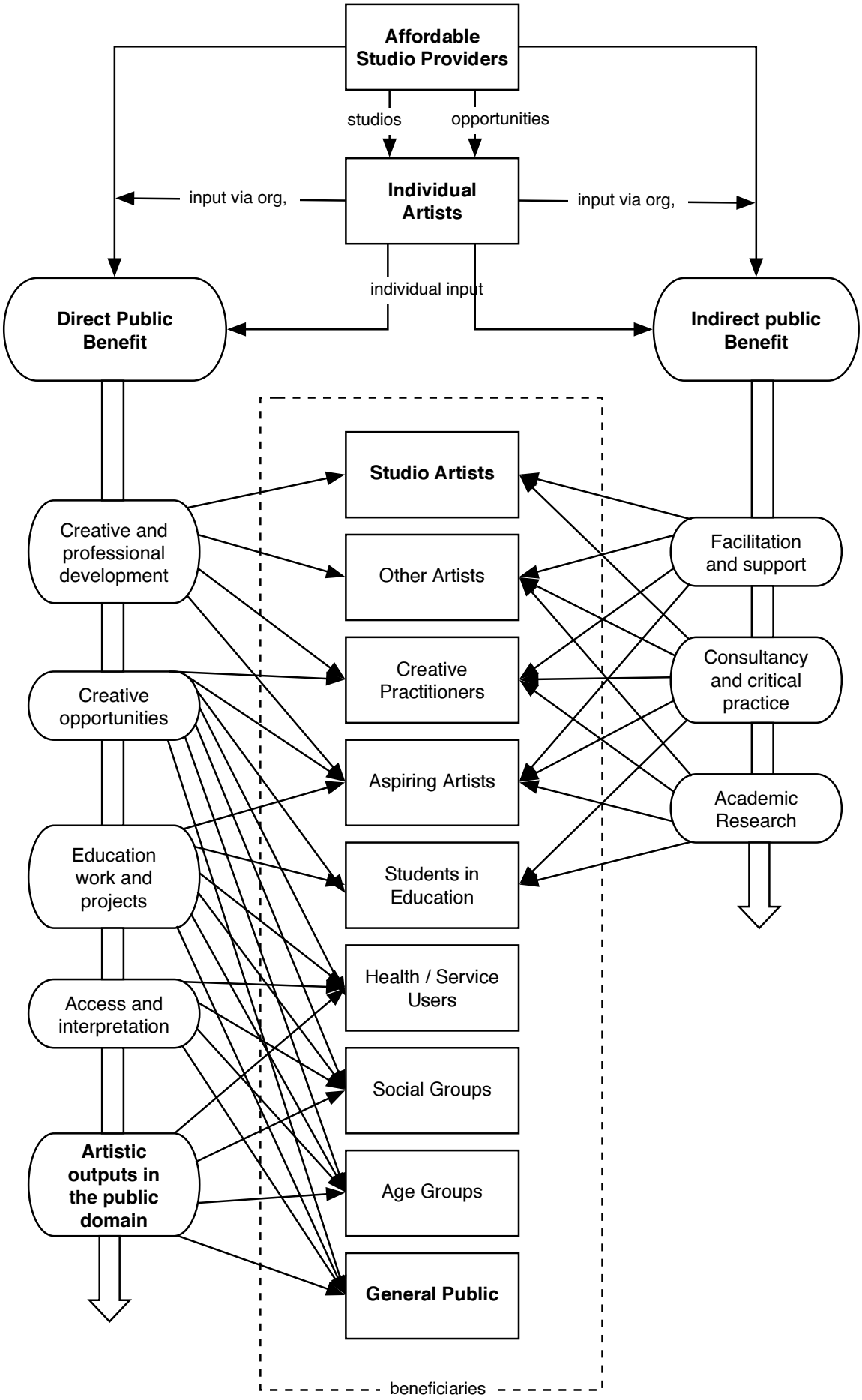
Lizzie Haines
Researcher (Open Festival 2006 evaluation).

Alison Lloyd
Head of Visual Arts, Arts Council England, East Midlands.

Val Millington
Director of the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers, for her interpretation of the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and helpful feedback on this report.

Eleanor Youdell
Senior Practitioner, Double Impact (Double Impact is a service for stabilised/recovering drug or alcohol users).

Appendix 2 – Affordable studios and public benefit



Notes

1. Mik Godley, artist at Egerton Studios, in response to case study questionnaire, May 2007.
2. Rob Van Beek, in response to case study questionnaire, May 2007.
3. *Artists' studios: creating public benefit*, Susie O'Reilly, Acme and Capital Studios, December 2006. http://www.acme.org.uk/
4. The Charity Commission definition of 'people on low incomes' typically covers households living on less than 60% of the average national income. Most artists would fall within this definition.
5. *Making a living as an artist,* Debra Savage, AN publications, October 2006.
6. Mik Godley, artist at Egerton Studios, in response to case study questionnaire, May 2007.
7. Stella Couloutbanis, Exhibition, Events and Festival manager, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University, in conversation, May 2007.
8. Denise Weston, in response to case study questionnaire, May 2007
9. Rob Van Meek, in response to case study questionnaire, May 2007
10. These classifications on areas of public benefit are based on definitions prepared by Naomi Dines, artist, lecturer, and Chair of the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers. A chart created by Naomi along with these classifications, showing the links between the different strands of benefits created and beneficiaries, is included as appendix 2.
11. Classifications are here taken directly from Naomi Dines' definitions. See appendix 2
12. Stella Couloutbanis, Exhibition, Events and Festival Manager, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University, in conversation, May 2007.
13. Quoted in 'The Open Festival 2006', an evaluation, Lizzie Haines, December 2006.
14. For a fuller history of the site see Simon Wither's account: http://www.nottinghamstudios.org.uk/oldknowsbuilding/history
15. Chris Lewis Jones, Oldknows artist, in conversation, May 2007.
16. Information gathered from *A register of artists' studio groups and organisations in England*, Acme Studios June 2006, and confirmed in the course of the case study research.
17. Quote from The Fish Can Sing, Communication and PR agency. Quoted on http://www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/iSpy/ArchiveiSpy/Peckhamcreative.html
18. Also known as The Bonington and 1851 Art Galleries.
19. Nottingham City Council's Arts and Events Strategy, 2001.
20. Alison Lloyd, Head of Visual Arts, Arts Council England, East Midlands, in conversation, May 2007.
21. The constitution covers meetings, voting procedures, management and finances, what happens to funds if the group is dissolved, misconduct, health and safety, respecting other studio-holders' right to continue their work and contributing to the profile of the group.
22. *A survey of artists' studio groups and organisations in England*, Acme Studios, May 2005, found the average size in the East Midlands was 270 square feet and nationally 308 square feet.
23. Currently the inclusive rent payable by artists per square foot per year is £2.60. *A survey of artists' studio groups and organisations in England*, Acme Studios, May 2005, found the average rent per square foot per year in the East Midlands was £2.87. This compares with a national average of £5.82.
24. Paul Matosic in conversation, May 2007.
25. Shaun has recently moved out of Egerton Studios, but still maintains active contact with Paul Matosic and is very involved with the Goldfactory project.
26. The Goldfactory : http://goldfactory.wordpress.com/
27. See *Artists studios: creating public benefit*, Susie O'Reilly, Acme and Capital Studios, December 2006. http://www.acme.org.uk/
28. Mik Godley, in response to questionnaire, May 2007
29. *Open Studios - a Gem Worth Polishing*, Paul Glinkowski, Arts Council England, 2003. http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publications/publication_detail.php?browse=title&id=196&page=13
30. See http://www.nottinghamopen.co.uk/
31. Chris Lewis Jones, in conversation, May 2007.
32. Rob Van Beek, in response to questionnaire, May 2007
33. Thomas Wright, in response to questionnaire, May 2007
34. Public comments, reported by Simon Withers, in response to questionnaire, May 2007
35. The Open Festival 2006, Lizzie Haines.
36. Chris Lewis Jones, in conversation, May 2007.
37. Shaun Belcher, response (in email) to questions about this project for this case study, May 2007.
38. Double Impact is a non-statutory drugs and alcohol agency, whose primary aim is to enable people recovering from problematic drug and alcohol use to move away from social exclusion, towards education, vocational training and employment. http://www.apas.org.uk/double_impact.htm For arts projects see Shaun Belcher designed site: http://www.doubleimpactarts.org.uk/
39. Eleanor Youdell, Senior Practitioner at Double Impact, in conversation, May 2007.
40. Shaun Belcher, details at: http://www.shaunbelcher.com/?p=103 and http://flyinshoesarts.wordpress.com/latest-projects/
41. Shaun Belcher, response (in email) to questions about this project for this case study, May 2007.
42. Paul Matosic, in conversation via email, May 2007
43. Deborah Dean, Visual Arts and Exhibitions Manager, Angel Row Gallery, in conversation, May 2007.
44. Stella Couloutbanis, Exhibition, Events and Festival manager, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University, in conversation, May 2007.
45. Chris Lewis Jones, in response to case study questionnaire, and in conversation, May 2007
46. ibid
47. See http://www.sideshowonline.org/about.php
48. Mark Patterson, Nottingham Evening Post, 2006.
49. Stella Couloutbanis, Exhibition, Events and Festival manager, Future Factory, Nottingham Trent University, in conversation, May 2007.
50. The Nottingham Studios Consortium is a group set up to work towards establishing a permanent location for artists' studios in Nottingham. More information on the consortium can be found at http://www.a-n.co.uk/cgi-bin/db2www.exe/tour.d2w/ input?section=2&topic=75003&id=213060&textonly=0
51. http://goldfactory.wordpress.com/
52. **tanc** is a Nottingham-based charity that provides an independent and free consultancy service to community groups/voluntary sector organisations that want to participate in regeneration initiatives.
53. See http://goldfactory.wordpress.com/
54. Mark Paterson, review of Shaun Belcher's work in the *Text Message* exhibition.
55. See http://belcheresque.wordpress.com/