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Cultural Creation and Production in the Inner West LGA
A case-study needs analysis

Report - December 2018

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Institute for Culture
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Executive Summary

This report was commissioned to assist the Inner West Council in developing a greater understanding of the nature and extent of future needs for creative space in the local government area (LGA), with a focus on infrastructure for cultural creation and production. The research focuses on the relationships between artists, creators, their activities, and the spaces that currently and potentially nurture cultural life in Sydney's Inner West. It follows two wider studies conducted within the City of Sydney LGA between 2016 and 2018 (Ang *et al*., 2016; 2018).

The objectives of this research were to:

- Provide detailed knowledge about the workspaces within which cultural and creative producers conduct their activities in the 35 km^2 urban area covered by the Inner West Council;
- Improve understanding of the social and economic environment within which cultural and creative sector agents operate, and the impact of this environment on their selection and use of particular venues or sites.

The report provides case-study profiles of 11 cultural venues, selected out of the hundreds currently in use within the Inner West LGA, through observational site visits and semi-structured interviews with space managers and users. It highlights five interrelated trends:

- **Gentrification** of the Inner West;
- **Emergence of hybrid enterprises** as a means of accommodating the commercialisation of cultural production and space;
- **Shift** from creative organisations **to creative venue managers;**
- **Co-location** and sharing of cultural infrastructure;
- **Maintenance of creative networks** well beyond permanent users.

The report also identifies nine problem areas affecting creating venues in the Inner West:

- **unaffordability and insecurity of tenure** of creative space;
- **disappearance** of industrial building stock;
- **rezoning** as mixed-use of former industrial precincts without making provision for existing creative venues;
- **unsuitability of new "creative spaces"** within major re- and new developments;
- **neglect of existing creative networks** when assessing rezoning and redevelopment applications by property developers;
- **inflexibility** in regulating creative land use;
- **vulnerability** to change (including relocation) of cultural organisations which have invested in refurbishing or renovating space for co-location;
- **lack of targeted support** for creative venue managers and recognition of their function as commercial operators;
- **ineffective alliances** among Inner West creative organisations.

This report parallels other research commissioned by the Inner West Council from Left Bank Co and JOC consulting (forthcoming, 2019). Whereas this latter research focuses broadly on issues faced by creative spaces and venues in the Eastern City District of Greater Sydney, our report concentrates on place keeping and place making strategies to support the cultural sector in the LGA, and offers 12 recommendations for a policy approach toward that end.

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Introduction

Background

This report follows in the footsteps of research conducted between 2016 and 2018 for the City of Sydney Council, which had the principal aim of mapping and analysing the needs of creative venues in the local government area (Ang *et al*., 2016; Ang *et al*., 2018). Extending the case studies to 11 new venues in the Inner West LGA, the research reported here seeks to enhance understanding of the needs and challenges faced by creative space operators in the area.

The previous studies highlighted: 1) the lack of affordable creative spaces in the city; 2) concerns about the suitability of existing creative spaces and their temporary tenures; and 3) the threat posed by the disappearance of industrial building stock to the survival of artistic creation and production in the inner city. The research linked the difficulties of maintaining creative venues within the area of the City of Sydney to three wider trends in the cultural sector: 4) casualisation of cultural workers (Morgan and Nelligan, 2018); 5) the widening gap between the more commercially-oriented cultural industries (advertising, architecture, design, etc.) and less

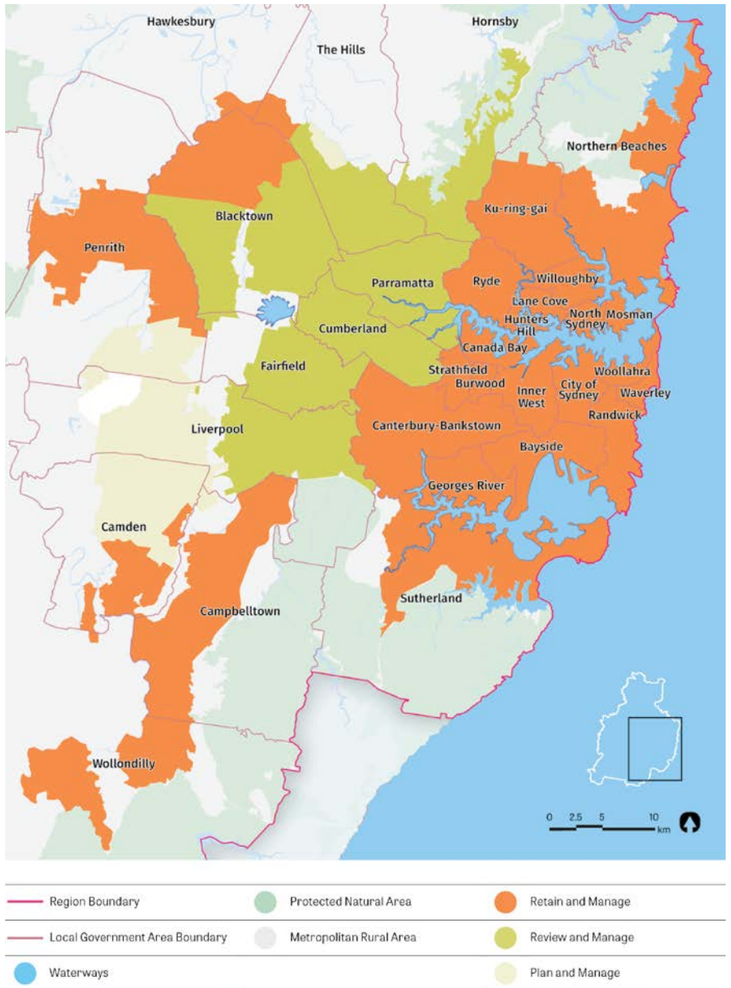


Image 1. *Approaches to Planning for Industrial and Urban Services Land in Existing and Planned Urban Areas. Source: NSW Government, 2018a, p. 134.*

profitable creative undertakings (visual arts, music, dance, theatre, etc.); and 6) the overall lack of adequate public institutional support both in terms of funding and cultural facilitation.

These issues are increasingly recognised by the different tiers of government. At the state level, the Greater Sydney Commission's most recent plan, *A Metropolis of Three Cities,* offers as one of its strategic directions the creation of a "City of Great Places" which would include increased access to cultural facilities and venues for artistic production and expression (NSW Government, 2018a). International best practice in cultural policy and planning also shows that governments have a key role in subsidising and preserving cultural infrastructure, as well as in making sure that it is sufficiently diverse and available for those who do not belong to the most profitable sectors of the creative industry (Stevenson, 2014; Grodach *et al*., 2017). Therefore, cities across the globe are pursuing policies that simultaneously (and often uncomfortably) promote cultural venues that can host both profitable organisations and less commercially-oriented organisations and creative practitioners, including young and emerging artists.

The role of small, bespoke and light-industrial productive enterprises has been acknowledged as crucial to maintaining a vibrant cultural urban life, given their history of, and potential for, supporting and triggering wider creative networks (Stevenson *et al*., 2016). Another recent Greater Sydney Commission report, *A Metropolis that Works*, argues that planning for Sydney's industrial and urban services land requires "a carefully considered and managed approach and, where appropriate, protection from competing land uses such as residential" (NSW Government, 2018b, 5; see also Image 1).

Such an approach is crucial for a Council such as the Inner West. Echoing other research (Gibson *et al*., 2017), this report shows that many light-industrial facilities are used by significant communities of artists and creators, and provide vital space for the continuing existence of cultural activities and organisations. The survival of such spaces for cultural creation and production, which tend to have lower direct economic value than commercial and residential uses, is at stake in a city experiencing a long-running population boom and increasing demands for residential and office space. Once converted to such higher-value use, industrial and warehouse spaces are likely to be forever lost to cultural creation and production activities, despite being vital elements of a thriving urban environment. In the absence of market drivers, public agencies must intervene — through the instruments of advocacy, cultural policy and land use regulation — to preserve and develop sites for cultural creation and production.

Recently, a report to the NSW Legislative Council, *The Music and Arts Economy in New South Wales*, pointed to land-use conflicts for live-music performance and to the disappearance of industrial areas for music rehearsal and recording spaces (NSW Legislative Council, 2018) as two of the major causes in the decline of music creation and production in the city.



Image 2. *Remaining warehouses in Marrickville support light-industrial activitites, such as the making of jewellery. The image shows the shared space in SquarePeg Studios.*

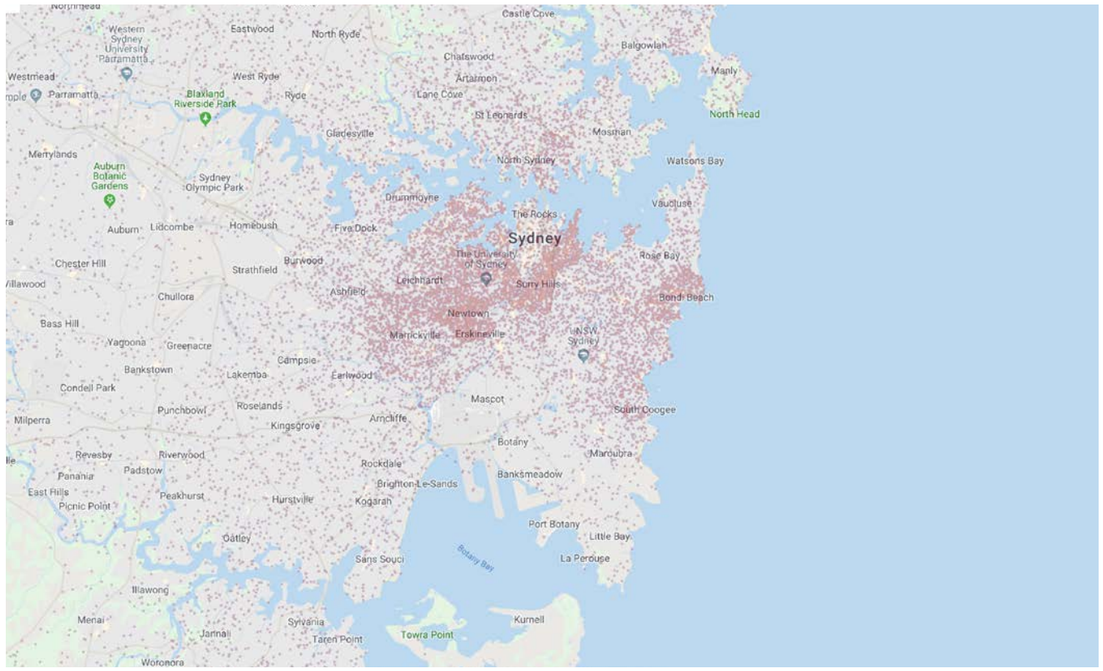


Image 3. *Map Charting Registered Musicians and Authors across Greater Sydney. Source: Davies, 2016.*

Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

- Provide detailed knowledge about the workspaces within which cultural and creative producers conduct their work in the Inner West LGA, and the role of such workspaces (commercial or otherwise) within wider cultural value chains;
- Gain understanding of the social and economic environments within which cultural and creative sector agents operate, and of the impact of these environments on their selection and use of venues or sites;
- Assess the trends and needs in the management of creative venues in the Inner West, in addition to those already identified in the previous research conducted by the same team in the City of Sydney LGA.

Methods

The reported research consists of 11 in-depth case studies of cultural venues/spaces, compiled through observational site visits and semi-structured interviews with 16 space managers and users. Where possible, the mobile method of "walking interviews" (Evans and Jones, 2011) was used to gather detailed, place-specific data.

The selected case studies were recommended by the Inner West Council following a creative spaces forum that was held in September 2018. A full list of the selected venues and their space categories can be found in Appendix 1.

About the LGA

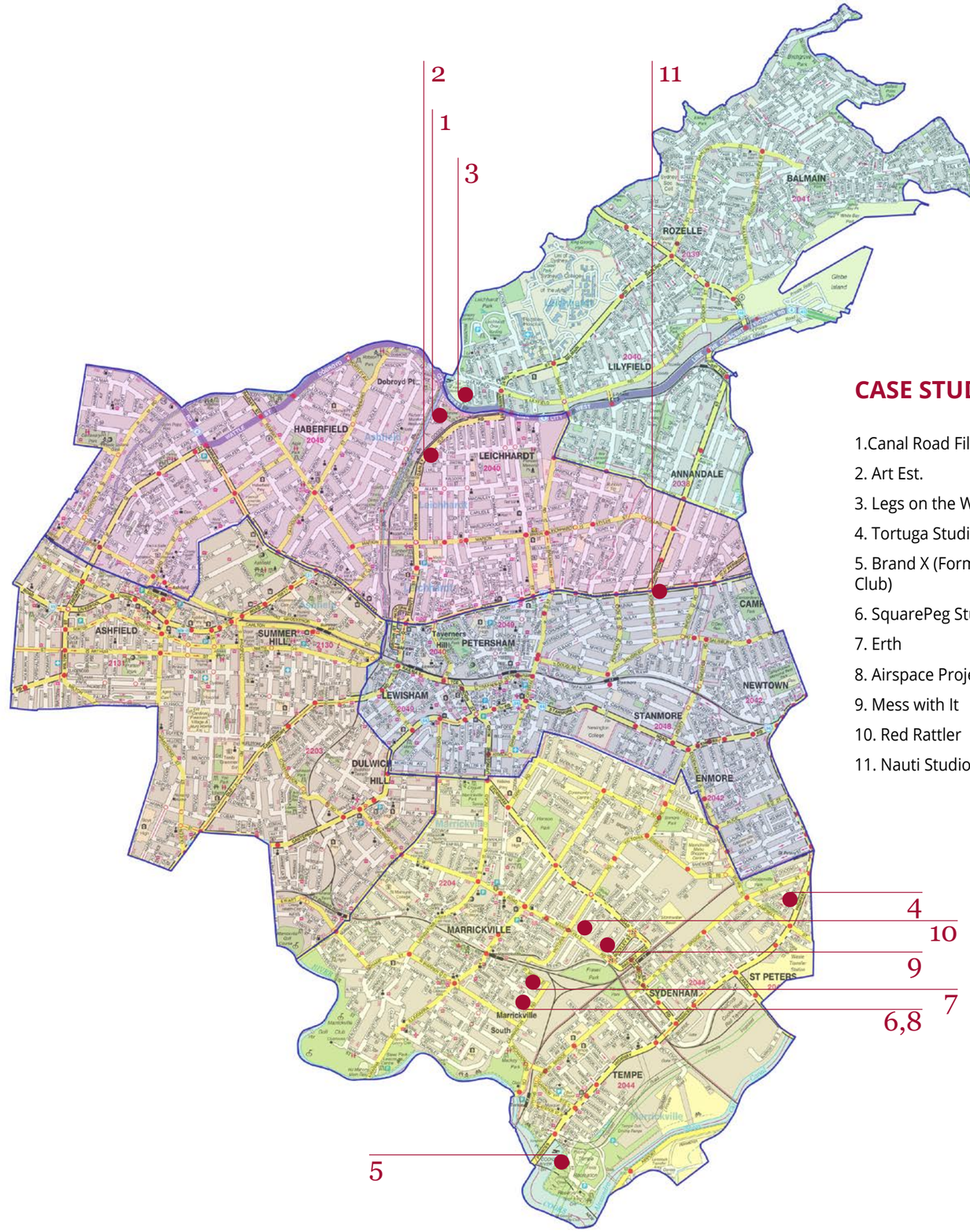
The Inner West Council is a local government area immediately to the west of the Sydney central business district. The Council is a product of the 2016 merger of the Ashfield, Leichhardt, and Marrickville Councils. This recent re-organisation of LGA boundaries has made it especially important to gain an understanding of the new Council's cultural infrastructure needs. With 182,043 residents in about 35 km^2, it is one of the five most densely populated LGAs in New South Wales (ABS, 2018).

Whilst median personal and household incomes in the LGA are about 1.5 times higher than the NSW and Australian average (ABS, 2018), high housing rents and property values place Inner West postcodes among the least affordable both in the Greater Sydney region and in the state as a whole (NSW Government, 2017). Despite these housing affordability issues, the Inner West LGA contains one of

metropolitan Sydney's principal creative clusters. This status was recently confirmed by an interactive map produced by the *Sydney Morning Herald* using postcode data from the membership lists of the Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) and the Copyright Agency/ Viscopy (2016). In the map, the Inner West suburbs appeared as among those containing the most spatially concentrated communities of musicians and authors (Image 3).

Creative and cultural industries are a key component of the Inner West's economy. Not only are they the fifth largest employer grouping in the area, contributing 8.8 per cent of jobs, they have also experienced positive growth in the last five years. The number of jobs, the economic output and the added value of these activities have grown more than other industries in the LGA, and have also outperformed the average growth for for the cultural sector in Greater Sydney as a whole (economyid, 2018).

Case Studies



CASE STUDY LIST

1.Canal Road Film Centre

2. Art Est.

3. Legs on the Wall

4. Tortuga Studios

5. Brand X (Former Tempe Jets Club)

6. SquarePeg Studios

7. Erth

8. Airspace Projects

9. Mess with It

10. Red Rattler

11. Nauti Studios



CANAL ROAD FILM CENTRE

www.canalroad.com.au

Venue Address

1 Canal Rd, Leichhardt NSW 2040

General Facts

Canal Road Film Centre (CRFM) is an umbrella organisation that runs Australia's largest independent film and TV production precinct. In contrast with other production hubs such as Fox Studios and Warner Studios, CRFM is a not-for-profit venture with a mandate to support small and low-budget Australian productions. However, the facilities have been and continue to be used also by major international blockbusters, as well as other productions, ranging from large physical advertising to theatre and TV.

Located on a three-and-half-hectare site in Leichhardt, the film centre is a fundamental piece of the NSW film and television infrastructure. CRFC accommodates dozens of film industry-related firms: set builders, AV companies, gaffers, grips, caterers, model makers, prop makers, costume makers, wig makers, unit managers, SFX, green-room makers, stunts and so forth. The uniqueness of CRFC is precisely in this diverse and complementary set of businesses, which offer a complete suite of production services at any time. The film centre itself can be hired for productions *in situ*, offering dedicated office space as well as filming facilities. The added-value is in the co-location on the same site, which generates and supports vital supply chains and crossovers in the NSW film and TV industry.

Our interviewee, John Weston, is general manager and one of the three directors of Canal Road Film Centre Pty Ltd—the shelf company—and the owner of Themetech, a physical advertising company that is one of the tenants and shareholders of CRFC. Themetech mainly works in the area of large physical advertising for sport events, but John has a long experience of working in the film industry, and has been part of the organisation since its beginnings as an informal group of filmmakers.

The Venue

The site of the film centre is a former industrial precinct on the shore of Hawthorne Canal, an artificial waterway that tributes the Parramatta River. When John and others involved in the Australian film industry found the site in 1994, they had been moving from one abandoned industrial precinct to the other for quite some time. From a former cigarette factory in Kingsford, to disused wharves in Kensington in Sydney's southern suburbs, their site was determined by a need for space where big trucks and containers could be parked.

Eventually, the current site was found. At that stage, it was a decommissioned Public Works depot, with a history dating back to the late 1920s, and still owned by the NSW State Government. The first tenants negotiated a lease with the public landlord in 1995, and the site was gradually transformed into a film production centre. In 2000, however, the state decided to terminate the lease. In response, the tenants organised a lobbying group, and advocated the importance of maintaining the film centre in Leichhardt. The outcome of that process was a 15-year lease and a charter that mandated CRFC's role to become one of supporting low-budget Australian productions. In 2016, the lease lapsed and the centre has since been on a month-to-month holdover, while it renegotiates a new lease with Property NSW.

CRFC accommodates dozens of film industry-related firms: set builders, AV companies, gaffers, grips, caterers, model makers, prop makers, costume makers, wig makers, unit managers, SFX, green-room makers, stunts and so forth.

The film centre consists of of several warehouses and sheds, of different sizes, materials and ages. The larger buildings are occupied by multiple tenants. The open space is also occupied by several tenants, who hire the space to park their trucks or even store their containers. The far end corner of the precinct is occupied by Lorose, a large equipment rental agency which keeps its





materials on site. Any number or combination of tenants could be working on a production at the same time. Under the terms of the original memorandum of understanding, CRFC also maintains specific production offices for low-budget Australian productions, meaning that they offer air-conditioned, furnished, and connected space for these kind of endeavours. Costume departments, art departments and other facilities are also located within the centre.

The Neighbourhood

The site is a triangle of land bounded by the canal on one side and the Inner West light rail on the other, just south of Iron Cove Bay, at the start of the Greenway. There are no proximate residential neighbours, enabling the light and medium-industrial operations of the Centre. In recognition of CRFC's important employment and cultural role, the Council recently rezoned the site as SP1 (a special purpose zone detailed as an Arts Precinct) in its latest Local Environmental Plan (LEP).

CRFC has been an active member of the local creative community, contributing to the Inner West Council's Open Studios initiative and to the Council's cultural



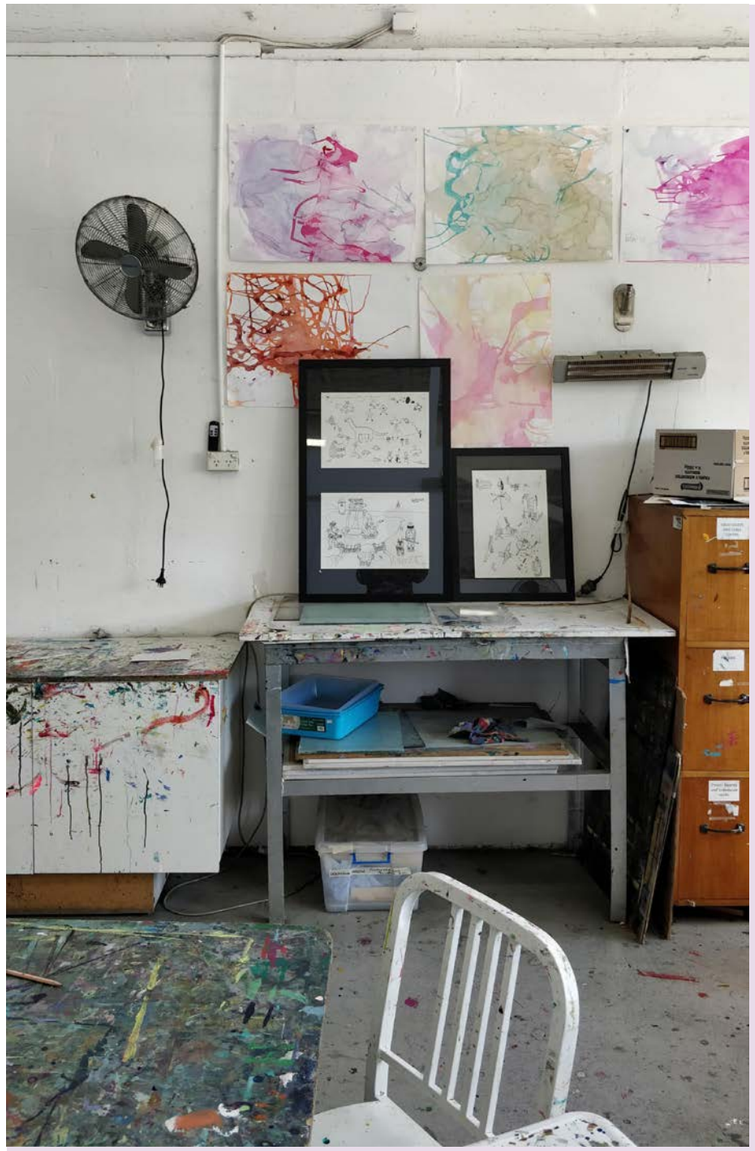
of the land as Special Activity SP1, what concerns John the most is the apparent lack of the same understanding at higher levels of government, who may see the site as a precinct of empty old warehouses ripe for redevelopment. A challenge may indeed come from the possibility of commercialising the land, which has a great property value given the close proximity of two light-rail stations.

For John, the challenges faced by the TV and film production community at CRFC also extend beyond the site, because of the difficulties in getting approvals for location shootings in the city as a whole. While he acknowledges that filming can very disruptive to a local council, location shooting is the only way to maintain local productions in Sydney. The current regulatory environment is not supportive, forcing many productions to relocate to more friendly filming locations. Whilst this is not a challenge that relates to the venue specifically, the survival of the companies hosted at CRFC does indeed depend on the vitality of the Australian TV and film industry — an industry experiencing what John describes as 'a deep crisis'.

policymaking. The importance of CRFC for the local area was also acknowledged when it was included in the GreenWay Cultural & Arts Corridor, an initiative that sought to connect the creative operations extending from Cockatoo Island and Callan Park to Hawthorne Canal. The GreenWay is a council initiative that aims at creating a "slow" and "green" infrastructure connecting Iron Cove to the North and the Cooks River to the South. The proposal involves the creation of a bike and footpath, as well as the upgrading of existing public spaces along the spine and the canal. Whilst the proposal may benefit the Centre, the current blueprint proposes that the waterway park includes some of CRFC's land — occupying space that is fundamental to its operations.

Pressure Points

The existence of the film centre is entirely dependent on its current site location. Recreating the same kind of production community elsewhere would not be easy, if possible at all, given the unique network that has now coalesced around CRFC due to the virtues of the site. While the council is supportive and acknowledges the importance of the centre, as exemplified by the rezoning



Every year the school gives work to more than 60 local artists, hosts more than a thousand students, holds exhibitions that attract hundreds of visitors, and is instrumental in building an immaterial network of creativity that, should the site be transformed into a residential development, would certainly be lost.

ART EST.

www.artest.com.au

Venue Address

4/67/69 Lords Rd, Leichhardt NSW 2040

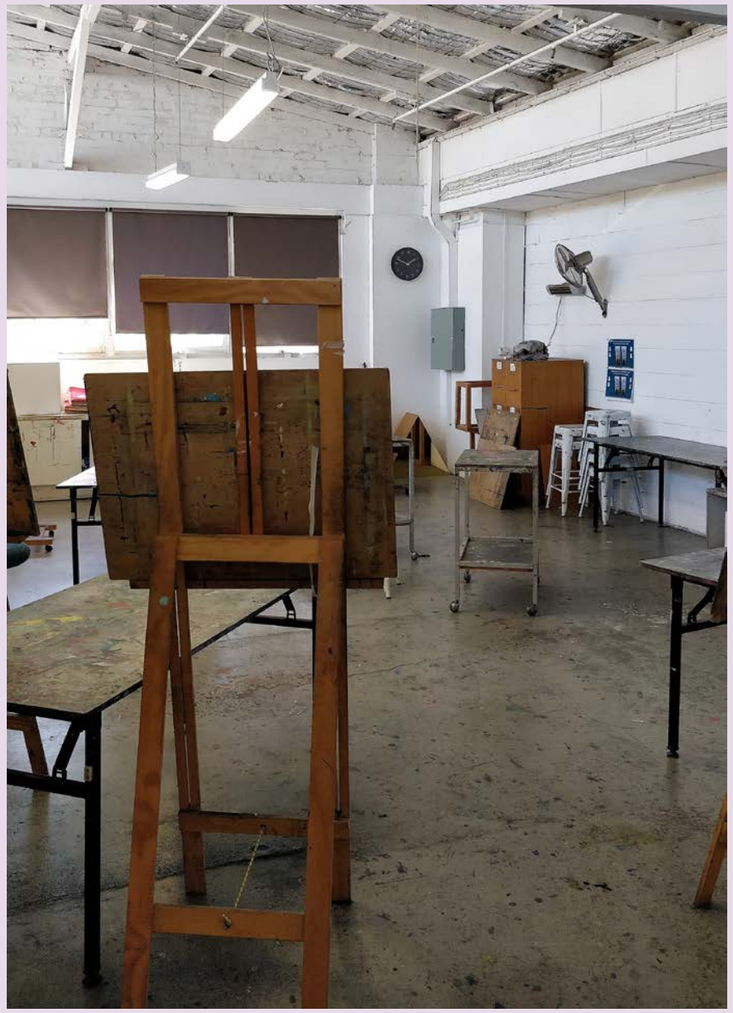
General Facts

Art Est. is a private Art School and Gallery based in Leichhardt. Established in 2008, Art Est. runs weekday classes, weekend workshops, and art programs, catering both to adults and children with a wide offering of creative lessons, ranging from painting and drawing to pottery, printmaking, cartooning, life drawing and travel sketching.

The school is open throughout the year, including summer, when special intensive programs are offered to those who cannot commit to longer time periods or who are seeking additional cultural experiences over the new year break. These programs allow Art Est. to engage well-known artists and to diversify the offer of tuition by addressing both beginners and more experienced artists. The summer timetable is complemented by a school-holiday programme attended by local children. In addition to these activities, Art Est. also hosts occasional events and organises corporate art workshops to foster team and relationship building among co-workers.

Given the broad range of these classes, the more than sixty artists tutoring at Art Est. are very diverse in terms of their range of skills and abilities. Some are art school graduates or self-taught artists, and others are qualified art educators. Whilst they are all employed on a casual basis, their contribution may vary from running up to four or five classes per week to conducting an occasional masterclass (as is the case with more established artists).

The school tutors are also the artists that Art Est.'s gallery mainly exhibits. In the past, Art Est. also tried to offer occasional exhibitions where external artists would hire the gallery space for a fee. But today the gallery is only available to the community, in other words to the artists that have been educated at or taught one of the school's classes. Every November, however, the gallery opens itself to the wider artistic community by hosting the GreenWay Art Prize, an annual exhibition sponsored by the Inner West Council that is now in its ninth year.



Attendees of Art Est. are generally from the Inner West but, given the shortage of similar schools in other parts of the city, up to half of them come from the eastern or northern suburbs of Sydney. Conversely, most of tutors are locals or live in close proximity.

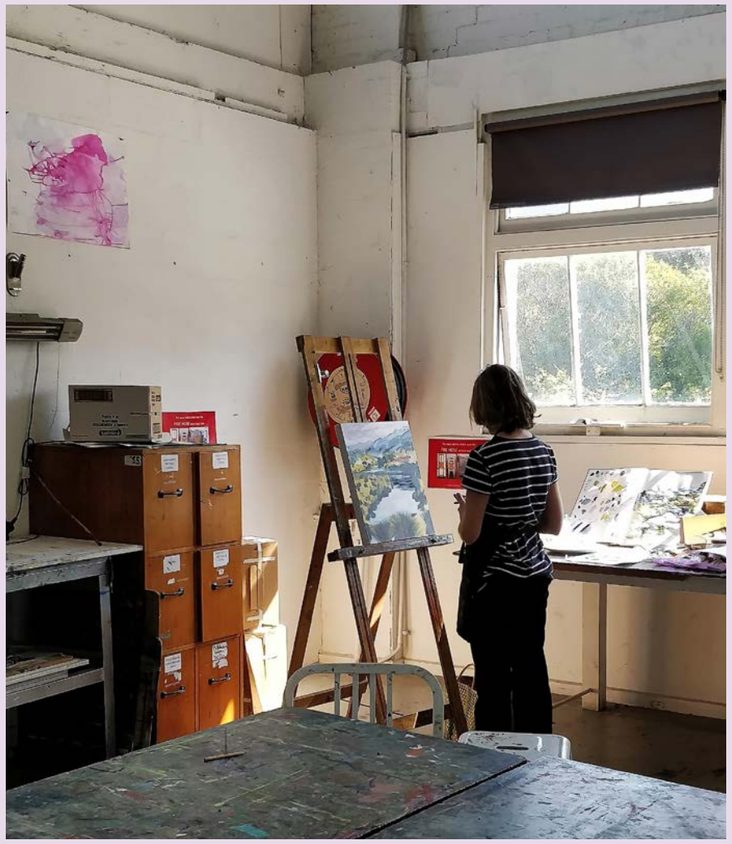
Jennifer McNamara, our informant, is the founder and director of Art Est. Before setting up the school, she worked in festivals, events and museum programs, then in business development at Sydney Olympic Park. Her experience in both business development and art curation has been crucial to starting up Art Est. and to making it a financially sustainable enterprise.



The Venue

Art Est. is located in a warehouse that originally served as a production facility for Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (later AWA), a Sydney-based electronics manufacturer. The complex is comprised of several adjoining warehouses on a block of land that is bounded by the Dulwich Hill light rail line and the GreenWay environmental and active travel corridor.

Jennifer remembers first coming across the industrial building while walking her dog. At that time, the building had just been



vacated by the previous tenants, who had used it for storing furniture and props for property stylings. In the same week, Jennifer received the results of a market-research survey that she had organised before opening the school, which showed that Leichhardt was the top preferred location for an art school in the Inner West. When she finally visited the building with the real estate agent, she realised that it was the perfect venue for the school that she had in mind.

Not only did it reflect the location preferences expressed in her market research, but the unobstructed, well-lit, white-painted space, with sturdy concrete flooring and a renovated roof, was highly suitable for the types of activity taking place in an art school. Her original thought was to subdivide the wide warehouse and only rent half of the space, but this arrangement fell through and Jennifer ended up renting the whole building. Instead of having just two teaching studios and a small space at the front, as she had envisaged, from its very beginning Art Est. included a wide gallery space at the front, three teaching studios, a wet space for clean-up and storage, and five small artist studios rented out to supplement the rental income. A kitchenette and an administration office complete the school's spatial suite.

In 2017, the warehouse space across the carpark became available when the local gym moved to larger premises. At that point, Jennifer had long wanted to enrich the Art Est. curriculum by offering pottery classes, but found many difficulties in doing so in the same building as painting and drawing classes of the school. With the new building available, she decided to expand the school with a pottery and ceramic studio, which is now available for pottery artists needing wheels and kilns for their work. Pottery and ceramics are also today included among the tuition offerings of Art Est.

The Neighbourhood

In addition to being in Leichhardt (as noted, the preferred location according to Jennifer's original market research), the specific location of Art Est. is a great advantage for its operations. Not far from the former industrial precinct, two light rail stations, two train stations and bus services within walking distance make it very accessible by public transport. Moreover, having a medium-sized car park on site allows teachers and art students to drive to the school without having to find and/or pay for a parking spot in the surrounding area. The close proximity of the GreenWay also means that the neighbourhood is intersected by the Inner West cycling routes, meaning that many locals can access the school by bike. Jennifer also mentions that having a shopping centre (MarketPlace Leichhardt) nearby is an advantage, as parents can leave their children at the school while attending to household shopping.

Its geographical location is not the only thing that makes the school a significant asset to the area. Although it is a private company, Art Est. often functions as a community art centre, with close ties with the Council, local primary and secondary schools, and with the artists who reside in the Inner West. An example of this close relationship is the GreenWay Art Prize, which Art Est. hosts as venue sponsor, helping in its development and staging, and showcasing the work of local artists.

The former industrial site itself, with its multiple tenants, is also conducive to good connections and relationships. Many of the

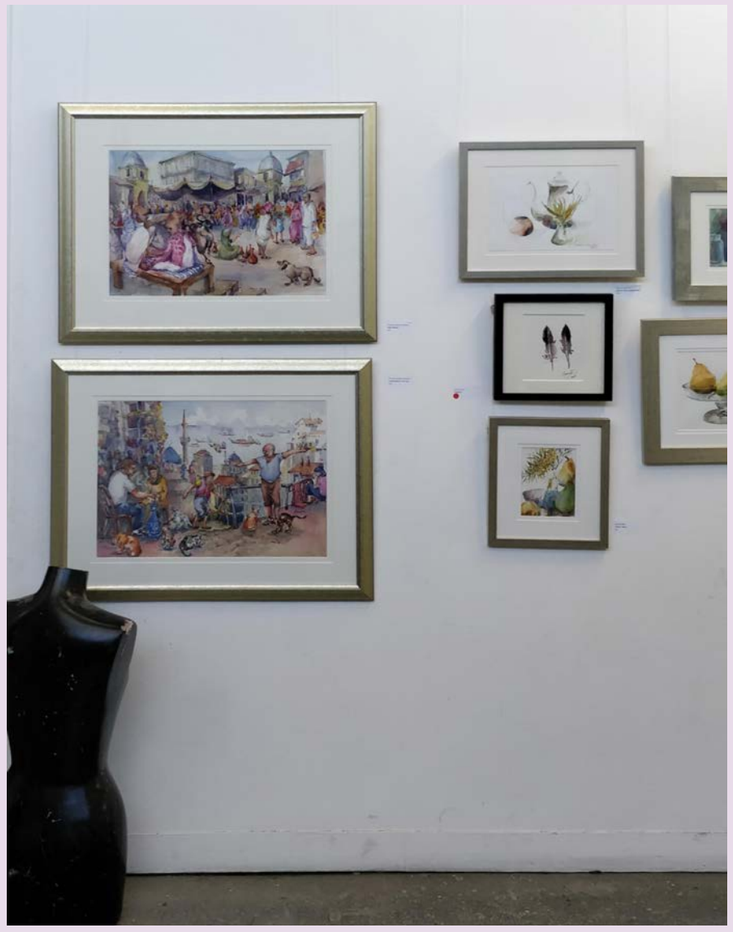


businesses hosted in the adjoining warehouses are also creative operations or light-industrial bespoke manufacturers, meaning that there are small but invaluable reciprocal economies among the like-minded tenants of the complex.

Pressure Points

The biggest threat to the survival of Art Est. as an independent art school in the Inner West is the possibility that the industrial site might be knocked down and transformed into apartment blocks. In fact, the complex is owned by a property developer who has been trying to rezone the site as a residential investment for at least five years. The most recent proposal included more than 300 apartments, a childcare centre, a cafe and other community facilities. This would completely erase the existing creative precinct, as the activities that are currently undertaken in the warehouses cannot move to shop fronts or be integrated with residential functions. Whilst the rezoning proposal has been opposed by many in the local community, who lodged thousands of submissions in the Development Approval process, and was rejected by both the local Council and the Joint Regional Planning Panel (to which it was submitted as part of the Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy), the threat still looms large. According to Jennifer, the developer has recently engaged a professional community consultation firm to gain favour among locals and to document their support for the rezoning proposal, in order to fast-track another application to the State's Planning Department.

For Jennifer, relocation of Art Est. may mean its demise. The spaces, facilities and accessibility granted by its current venue are a rarity in the Inner West and in Sydney as a whole. Warehouses in industrial parks (eg., in Marrickville) may not be the right kind of space for the form of creative network that coalesces around Art Est. The remaining industrial spaces in outer suburbs, on the other hand, may be too far away for the school's customers. In Jennifer's view, the economic and cultural value of existing creative operations is grossly underestimated when assessing redevelopments such as the one proposed for this site. Art Est., for example, only employs a handful of people full-time (thereby reducing estimations of its economic and cultural impact), but every year the school gives work to more than 60 local artists, hosts more than a thousand students, holds exhibitions that attract hundreds of visitors, and is instrumental in building an immaterial network of creativity that, should the site be transformed into a residential development, would certainly be lost.





LEGS ON THE WALL

www.legsonthewall.com.au

Venue Address

91 Canal Road, Lilyfield NSW 2040

General Facts

Legs On The Wall (LOTW) is a physical theatre company based in the northern end of Sydney's Inner West. Performing in-theatre and site-specific physical theatre works, they are perhaps known most widely for their aerial performances that involve suspended performers and floating stage effects and apparatus. Established in 1984 by a group of street artists, the company was incorporated as an association in the early 90s, and has since reached both national and international fame with productions ranging from small plays to performances at grand global events, including the London Cultural Olympiad or the Commonwealth Games. LOTW often collaborates with other theatre, dance, circus, music, and art producing companies, artists, practitioners, and institutions to produce shows that feature multiple artistic expressions, including the aerial element that the company is best known for.

In the early 2000s, the NSW State Government recognised the importance and uniqueness of LOTW by investing in a purpose-built facility that would serve as rehearsal space for companies involved in aerial productions. The building, called "Red Box" for its colour and shape, was added to a former industrial precinct located on the shore of the Hawthorne Canal in Lilyfield. It was entrusted to LOTW on condition that they would pay rent, manage the space that includes part of the remaining industrial buildings, and allow other theatre companies to use the rehearsal facilities. The Red Box has since become a staple in Sydney's theatrical milieu, with thousands of performers and artists using it each year to experiment, rehearse and produce shows whose needs for height, rigging facilities and suspended equipment would not be met in normal theatre venues.

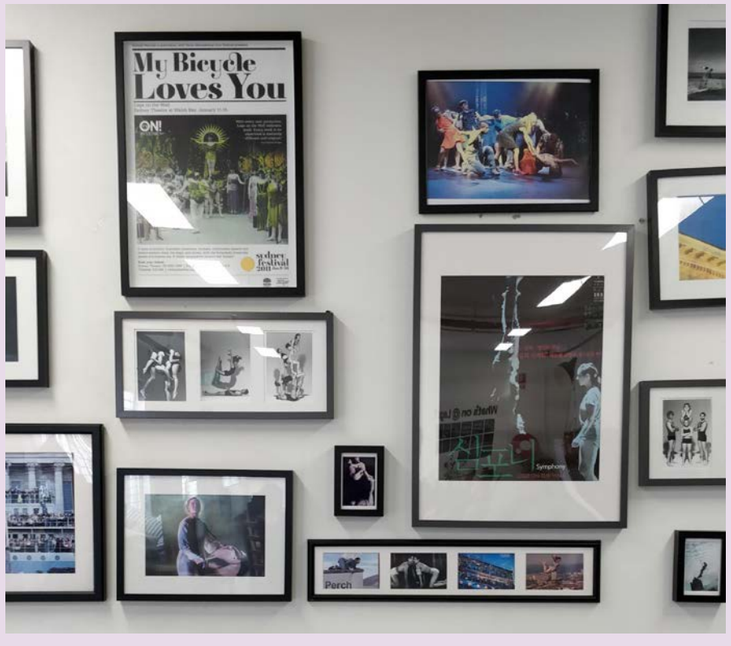
In 2016, LOTW lost its core funding from the Australia Council for the Arts, which had been a key supporter over two decades. At that time, more than fifty other medium-sized creative organisations previously funded by the Australia Council were defunded, after a controversial reorganisation of federal cultural subsidies. Physical theatre companies, given their prominence in the Australian cultural landscape, were particularly affected by these changes, with only a few of them included into the funded shortlist.

Many of them had to reinvent themselves and their business models to survive. For LOTW, the loss of funding determined a change in the structure of the organisation and in its relationship to the venue.

When news about the defunding broke, Cecily Hardy, our informant, had only recently been headhunted by the LOTW executive to fill the role of associate producer, to help across the different activities of the company. Her previous experience was varied, having worked as a social change producer, teacher, actor, auctioneer and marriage celebrant. Whilst the executive producer resigned soon after the funding news, Cecily was encouraged to stay, to offer some stability and to support LOTW through this difficult and precarious period. She agreed, believing that LOTW still had a voice in the Australian theatre world, and that she could help the transition. After consultation with the company's creatives, the board of directors was offered a shortlist of proposed future directions.

The Red Box has since become a staple in Sydney's theatrical milieu, with thousands of performers and artists using it each year to experiment, rehearse and produce shows whose needs for height, rigging facilities and suspended equipment would not be met in normal theatre venues.

One of these options, supported by some of the previous leadership, was to shut the company down. The Board of Directors chose instead to keep LOTW operating and to undertake instead an organisational overhaul: shifting from a costlier executive-producer model to a more bottom-up, artist-driven structure, with emergent artistic leadership and a small core team. The change was approved and two young, emerging leaders in the company were appointed as artistic directors on a trial period, while Cecily took the role of senior creative producer. To manage the complex calendar of productions, rehearsals and concurrent activities, the core team also includes a dedicated venue manager and administrator, who liaises with organisations and individuals that use the venue facilities.



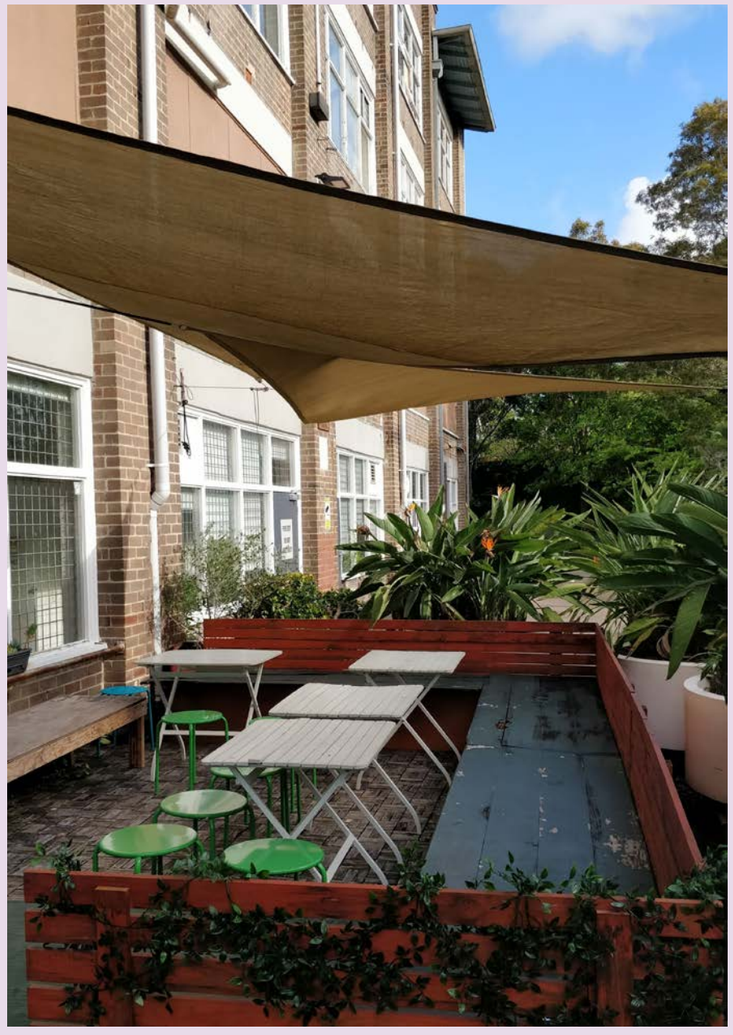
As a result of the funding loss, LOTW also expanded its role as a venue manager. Specifically, the warehouse space originally used only for rehearsals is now hired for commercial productions—an income-generating activity. The office space that LOTW does not need is also sublet to small companies for a subsidised rent. Despite recent difficulties, LOTW has been able to maintain both roles of venue manager and community facilitator. They continue to have internal processes of mentorships, free training, upskilling, and support for mid-career artists (with a specific residency program) and small creative organisations.

The Venue

The former industrial site on Canal Road, bounded by the City-West Link highway to the South, is located on Crown Land, and is thus owned and managed by the state government. The site was previously used by the Australian Army Parachute Riggers, who conducted training, maintenance and storage of parachutes there for about thirty years. For this unusual use, the original warehouse was purpose-built by the Australian Defense Force; other buildings in the precinct have been added by Arts NSW (now Create NSW) during the early 2000s.

During the same period, LOTW moved into the precinct, having operated for many years in a shed on Addison Road in Enmore. Arts NSW's visionary initiative for the site was to have a rehearsal hub for experimental aerial and physical theatre in Sydney. For that purpose, the Red Box was specifically designed as a 14m-high, 480 sqm-large stage featuring extensive rigging capabilities, both inside and outside the building. These characteristics make the venue unique in the landscape of rehearsal facilities in NSW. The building itself, as Cecily explains, has been capable of fostering cutting-edge innovations in the Australian physical theatre scene.

Chosen to be the anchor tenant at a negotiated rental amount, LOTW was also entrusted part of the former parachute-repairs warehouse. In addition to office space on the lower level of the four-storey building, they were allocated 1200 sqm on the top level—an unobstructed, 50m-long hall with visible roof trusses. In this space, LOTW manages Studio 1, which is hired out for professional film, TV, and photographic shoots, corporate events, music recordings, production work and other creative happenings.



Pockets of the remainder of the warehouse were initially utilised by independent theatre companies for affordable storage and rehearsal. Due to high demand, Create NSW has had to re-allocate this space to the storage requirements for major Sydney performing arts companies, particularly those being decanted from Walsh Bay, currently undergoing to renovations. This has fuelled an outcry from some of the displaced arts companies, and professional independent and small/medium sized companies more broadly, who have argued that the space should be made available to those with greater need and benefit. According to Cecily, such arguments call for a renovation in the State government's vision for the precinct: to transform it to a hub for professional Inner City independent and small/medium arts practitioners and producers, particularly those with successful arts practices and demonstrable output.

The Neighbourhood

In spite of its uniqueness for aerial theatrical rehearsal and performance, the 91 Canal Road precinct is rather unknown to the general public and to Inner West residents. Recently LOTW has sought to open up the venue to the local community. Unfortunately, the site was never conceived to welcome audiences. Indeed, while a military precinct, it was designed to limit public access. Even the Red Box, though able to host crowds, was devised as a rehearsal rather than exhibition or performance venue. Nonetheless, LOTW feel that there is scope for exploring ways in which its producers and practitioners can better speak to, engage, and work with the local community; an interest shared by Inner West Council.



Pressure Points

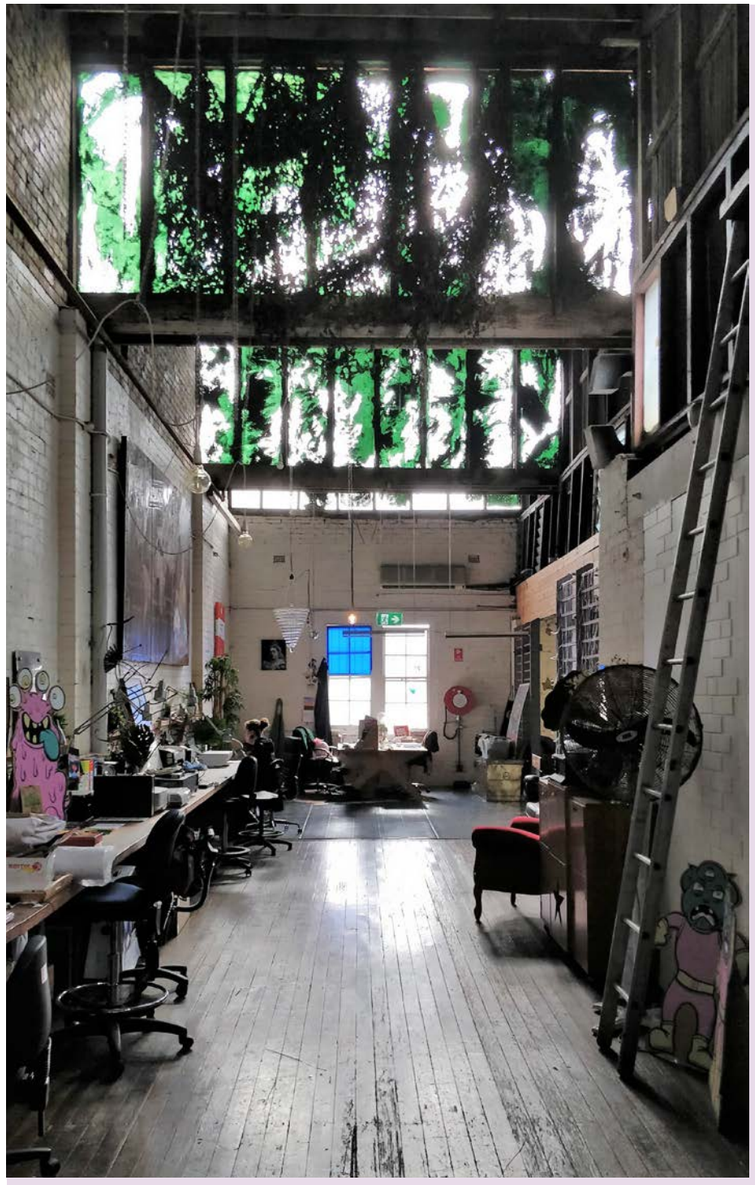
Having survived a difficult transition from full subsidisation through a mix of federal and state funding, to being reliant upon diversified public and private income streams, LOTW's relationship with the Canal Road venue remains complex. As the site is designated Crown Land, there is a degree of uncertainty about leasing terms and future plans. LOTW's capacity as a physical theatre company is now inextricably connected to the Red Box. The company's existence would be at stake, or at least heavily impacted, if rent is increased, if the key tenants were to change, or if there were a change of permitted activity.

Currently LOTW continues to operate on a 'business as usual' basis, and works on being a good tenant with open lines of communication to Create NSW's property management.

A challenge facing the venue concerns the possibility of hosting live audience performances. A potential revenue stream and means for engaging the public, this opportunity must overcome restrictions of zoning and other regulations. Applying for relevant permits is too costly and time-consuming for a small arts organisation such as LOTW, which means that further opportunities to engage the local council are limited. There are also other concerns, such as the impact of public traffic and congregation on other tenants, particularly those whose use of the space relates to storage rather than performance or rehearsals.



A more general pressure weighing on the theatre community, and addressed by Cecily in our discussion, relates to the lack of affordable space for rehearsal and storage. Cecily has witnessed the displacement of small companies due to eviction, higher operating costs and lack of space. These challenges are not new, but have intensified in the last few years, as more and more theatre and arts practitioners freelance or work as independent contractors, and as established companies lose their ability and resources to incubate new creative work. This process of casualisation, worsened by the spatial difficulties of having secure venues to maintain large theatrical operations, may have a detrimental effect on the quality and innovation of Australian theatre, with only few companies able to survive in the inner city, producing less diversity of performance.



TORTUGA STUDIOS

www.tortugastudios.org.au

Venue Address

31 Princes Hwy, St Peters NSW 2044

General Facts

Tortuga Studios is an artist-run initiative (ARI) with its own gallery, a co-working space for creative practitioners and artists, and a production house for TV, film and theatre, which includes a suite of different companies ranging from set builders to lighting designers and prop-makers.

Tortuga is the offspring of a previous artist-run studio workshop collective, Mekanarky, which housed around 25 emerging and established artists in Turella's old Streets ice cream factory. The purpose of Mekanarky, which started in 2001, was to maintain a creative hub in one of the remaining warehouses on the fringes of the city by offering affordable studio space and a network of creative support to its members. When that industrial building was demolished in late 2007 and developed as apartments, Mekanarky dissolved, but three members of the collective decided to pursue its mission and founded Tortuga Studios in another warehouse — this time in St Peters.

The artist-run initiative is a not-for-profit incorporated association, which features about 17 artists-in-residence and an exhibition/gallery space that can be used for shows, performances and events. The co-working space, on the other hand, is a for-profit business, with 9 studios, hot desks and a photographic atelier.

Today, Tortuga Studios is a hybrid enterprise that merges different types of organisation. The artist-run initiative is a not-for-profit incorporated association, which features about 17 artists-in-residence and an exhibition/gallery space that can be used for shows, performances and events. The co-working space, on the other hand, is a for-profit business, with 9 studios, hot desks and a photographic atelier. A diverse range of artists, creative professionals and companies is hosted on the

premises, including a bag maker and fabric expert, small audio-visual production companies, a sculptress and prop maker, fine artists, a rigger from Sydney's Opera House, a professional editor and copywriter, a carpenter, cartoonist, creative recruitment consultancy, and a lightbox maker, plus several videographers, photographers and graphic designers, a set builder and special effects expert and an Indigenous educational program team. Advertisers, creative directors and photographers also occasionally hire the photographic studio.

Our interviewee is co-founder and co-director of Tortuga Studios, Hellen Morgan-Harris. One of the 10 creatives originally involved in Mekanarky, she now runs the co-working space as chief host, in addition to operating her own copywriting and editing business. Hellen has also been a vocal advocate of the need to preserve and maintain spaces for creative production and light industry in the Inner West in light of their disappearance and replacement with residential units.

The Venue

Having left Turella's old ice cream factory, in 2008 Hellen and the other co-founders came across the current venue of Tortuga Studios by chance. Part of a large industrial block which then featured many more warehouses, the industrial building used to be a brick factory, and had been more recently used as a rag trade storage facility by its owner.

The complex comprises two interconnected buildings: a tall, two-storey warehouse and a smaller one-storey brick structure, meaning that it has street access on both sides of the block, with a useful rear entrance for truck deliveries. The main building houses a small shop front, where the gallery space is located, as well as studios and co-working spaces distributed across its two levels. Bright, natural light comes into the building from its large windows and from its skylight openings on the roof. The rear building, on the other hand, is where most of the light-industrial operations take place, with set builders, light designers, AV experts, and prop-makers working in a communal workshop.

Initially, Tortuga Studios only occupied the downstairs section of the complex containing its artist-run studios and set production workshop. More recently, the upstairs space became available and Hellen decided to take the full lease on the building to launch the co-working facility as well. As she recalls, much effort was put into transforming a crumbling industrial space into a "grungy" yet welcoming co-working office for creatives. For Hellen, there is something valuable in the industrial memories that are preserved in the building by continuing its productive life through creative endeavour, something that transcends the bad thermal insulation, the noise of the planes landing, the leaks in the roof, and the high maintenance costs that make Tortuga a barely sustainable business.

The downstairs workshop still



accommodates large-scale productions, especially for TV and movies, with a community of both *in situ* and external creatives that construct sets, including their furniture, clothing, lighting and special effects.

The Neighbourhood

Tortuga is located in the so-called "creative triangle" of St Peters, a former industrial precinct bounded by the railway line to Sydenham and the Princes Highway. On its lanes, dotted with warehouses, depots, and residential pockets, a vibrant community of artists and creative organisations used to converge, including Arcade Screen printing, The Forge, Dirty Kitsch, Alpha House, Penguin Plays Rough, May Street Artist Studios and Gallery, Index, Wundermite and Eden. In recent years, however, many of these creative enterprises have had to relocate or shut down as a large number of the warehouses in which they were located have been demolished or redeveloped.

For Tortuga, this gradual withering away of St Peters' creative edge has meant that it has become the remaining anchor for a nexus of artists and creatives that have had to move away or transform their creative activities into more profitable businesses. As a bastion of the old creative precinct, Tortuga still interacts with those who have left, even if they are no longer in the neighbourhood. At events like *In the Night Garden*, a light-based art exhibition where the back lanes of St Peters are lit to showcase its creative venues, Tortuga is still able to marshal the old network of organisations and individuals, and successfully engages with local residents. The event has also become a way to maintain the living memory of St Peters' inventive energy. Sadly, however, as the warehouses are replaced by apartments, *In the Night Garden* will not continue in the future. Not only has it become too difficult to deal with the complaints of apartment-living neighbours, which put at risk the very existence of Tortuga, but there are not enough venues left to justify such a costly venture.

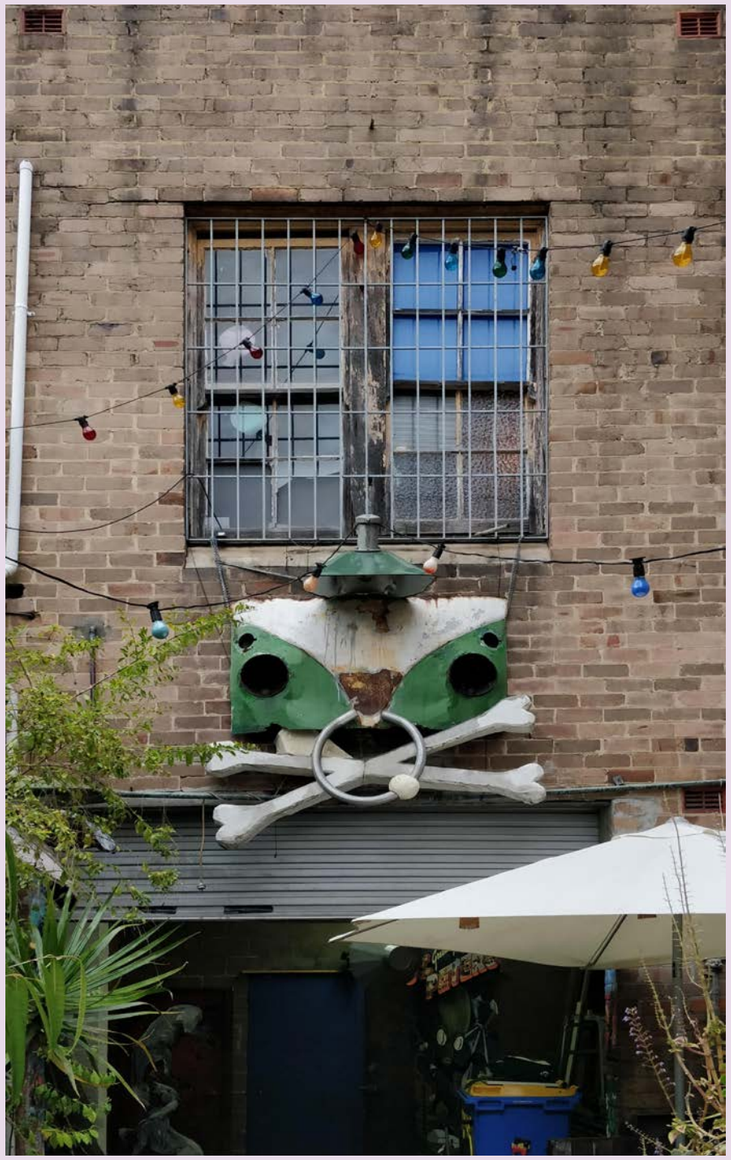


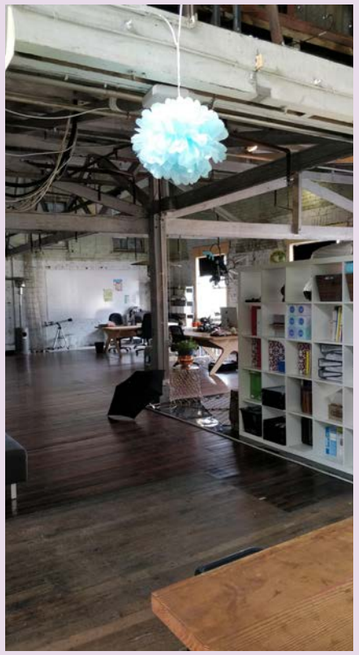




Pressure Points

The warehouse space where Tortuga Studios is located is old and requires a lot of maintenance, often beyond the means of the organisation. For this reason, the businesses and artists that do use the facilities understand that the building is rusty, dusty and poorly-insulated, but the community spirit and the uniqueness of the warehouse space that it offers compensate for these shortcomings. Recent transformations in the neighbourhood, however, have added a further level of complication to its operations.





The pace of redevelopment in the area has produced dust, asbestos debris, heavy noise, and traffic jams that have severely affected life and work at Tortuga Studios. Most recently, the demolition of the brick warehouses that stood on the other end of the block, to make space for an apartment building (ironically called Brick Lane), has caused concerns for the safety of the people working at Tortuga (given the amount of dust produced by the bulldozing). Moreover, the presence of trucks and other construction machines has made it difficult, and often impossible, for both Tortuga companies and their suppliers to access the back lane loading area.

An even more negative impact has been caused by the construction of the WestConnex motorway network, which is half a kilometre south of Tortuga. The smell deriving from the remedial works on a former landfill site, the clouds of dust, traffic restrictions and jams, and the large number of trucks criss-crossing the area threaten Tortuga's future. Notwithstanding the endurance of Hellen and her colleagues, and the fact that they have a medium-term lease allowing them to stay for the next 3-6 years, the WestConnex St Peters Masterplan threatens their long term survival. In the new blueprint for the area, the whole industrial block is to be replaced by apartments, with an 'art space' within the buildings and a private open space that, ironically, is earmarked as the gardens of the apartments that will one day replace Tortuga.



BRAND X (FORMER TEMPE JETS CLUB)

www.brandx.org.au

Venue Address

Holbeach Avenue, Tempe NSW 2044

General Facts

Brand X started in 2005 as a response to the beginning of the first wave of re-developments that transformed the industrial landscape in the Inner West. James Winter and his business partner, Samantha Chester, used to rehearse in a former Flour Mill in Newtown, managed by The Fondue Set (a dance collective) as a dance facility. In the old mill, many other creative organisations were active at that time. When the whole industrial precinct was closed for redevelopment and the mill itself transformed into a commercial grade office building for creative studios, James and his partner decided to take on a 3x2 year commercial lease on a warehouse for use by other performing artists as a rehearsal studio for hire.

They first moved to Chippendale, where they started Queen Street Studio with the aim of providing space for rehearsal to those who could not afford existing facilities. The Studios became so well known in the community and surrounding area that, when Frasers Property Australia bought the former Carlton and United Brewery site (now Central Park), Brand X was approached to activate three industrial buildings in that precinct. It was at that point that Brand X started specialising in the place activation of temporary cultural infrastructure in the city.

In its almost 15 years of operation, Brand X has activated 17 venues across the city, working in both the pre- and post-development phases of private and public urban transformations. For the former Marrickville Council, Brand X recently brought to a close the temporary artists' studios operating in the Camperdown Bowling Club, now transformed into an urban farm and community restaurant called Camperdown Commons. On the North Shore, it has been operating the TWT creative precinct for about six years. What was supposed to be only a 12-month creative activation has emerged as a community of over seventy artists using a series of buildings that are due to be demolished. In projects of this sort, James and his team have been operating in a liaison role between local councils and private developers, who use Brand X expertise in place-making to help comply with their voluntary planning agreements (VPAs), usually involving consultations, temporary uses and post-development community initiatives.

In the Inner West LGA, Brand X was asked to manage the former Tempe Jets Club building in Tempe in 2012. The venue was



destined to be demolished and turned into a stadium, but the council amalgamation and the construction of WestConnex have halted this redevelopment. As is Brand X's practice in each of the venues that it activates, the Tempe Jets space is curated around each sub-sector's need — in this case, music production and rehearsal. This focus arose because, when Brand X was first asked to run the building temporarily, many music venues in the Inner West were still operating. Brand X thus envisaged a space with one or two major anchor tenants that would work as attractors and incubators of recording artists and related small music businesses. Originally, it also had a rehearsal facility that allowed service organisations in the music industry to connect and interact with the artists rehearsing in the space. Today, that space is used instead by visual artists.

In terms of legal structure, Brand X Productions Incorporated is a not-for-profit arts organisation, run by a board of artists and creative industry practitioners. Its business model is based on partnership agreements with the tenant artists and organisations who sublet the venues that Brand X leases. This partnership agreement is very similar to a sublease contract, but it gives the tenants more ownership and decision-making power with respect to the spaces that they use.

Our informant, James Winter, is the founding director of Brand X. As a professional theatre director, he believes that there is added value in having venues *for* artists also run *by* artists, who understand better their own spatial needs. In addition to being Brand X's director, James is still involved in many theatrical productions.

The Venue

Located on the green peninsula formed at the intersection of the Cooks River and the Alexandria Canal, the Tempe Jets Club venue used to be a lawn bowling club. When Brand X took over the space, the building was in an utter state of disrepair, infested by pests that hid in the overgrown grass. Part of the tenancy deal was that Brand X should look after the former sports club and activate it for the arts. It also included a very important restriction on the uses of the venue, curbing the maximum number of people inside the building to only 25. This limitation has been a great impairment to its viability, particularly because a building of that size (more than 700sqm) would have the capacity for many more users, and sometimes rehearsals require larger numbers of performers and technicians. James believes that this restriction was imposed to avoid the noise complaints that had emerged in the past, when the club was also used as a party venue.

However, the large scale of the shared facilities in the building has also been a means of connecting the community of tenants. Because they all have to traverse the main hall to reach their studios and offices, a shared sense of communal ownership has developed among the residents. Their capacity to self-



organise and manage a timetable of activities that may not be compatible with one another demonstrates this cooperative spirit. In addition to the shared space and four sheds outside, the building accommodates six separate offices/studios and a rehearsal space in what used to be the poker machines section of the club. The rehearsal studio, though, had to be axed because it was too hard to manage the restrictions and safety measures imposed on the buildings.

The Neighbourhood

As James recalls, the chaotic times of the councils' amalgamation into the Inner West LGA were a lucky coincidence, because they allowed the Tempe Jets Club to pass "under the radar" for about two years, allowing time to build a community that is now recognised and considered important among independent performers, musicians, visual artists and sound architects.

The location of the building, surrounded by natural reserves, parks and the Model Car Association's racing tracks, means that residents are not affected by the noise produced in the building, and that parking, loading and unloading is easy. Most tenants, James explains, live and work in the Inner West, and need to use their cars and vans to move equipment across the city. Therefore, the car accessibility of the area is an important factor in the venue's success in the live music community.

However, being so remote has its disadvantages. The tenants have had to introduce a new security system to avoid robberies and, most importantly, there is no pedestrian thoroughfare that connects the venue to other creative precincts in the Inner West. While Brand X has been part of the Open Studio Trail, for example, the isolation of the building means that it will be very hard to transform it into an income-making facility, given that it would have to combine a range of potentially incompatible economic models.

In its almost 15 years of operation, Brand X has activated 17 venues across the city, working in both the pre- and post-development phases of private and public urban transformations.

Pressure Points

The main challenge faced by Brand X with regard to the Tempe Jets venue is the state of the building, which was neglected for many years. The roof is not in a good condition and there is a considerable detritus from its previous uses, including large industrial freezers and fridges that take up considerable room. James



would like to be able to invest in proper industrial cleaning of the venue, but knows that the roof is the most expensive piece of infrastructure that needs attention, and the future of Brand X's lease on the building is not sufficiently certain to justify the investment at this stage.

More generally, Brand X is faced with the semi-permanent nature of all its operations. This situation makes it difficult to plan, but also adds a further level of difficulty in understanding the types of investment that are needed for the various venues that it activates. As examples, both the Tempe Jets and the St. Leonards spaces were only meant to be short-term operations, but they have been running for many years. Had Brand X known this in advance, it would have set up these facilities differently and with more durable provisions. The furnishings used, for instance, are now becoming obsolete as they were not expected to be used for an extended period.

Solving this problem is difficult because Brand X is often the recipient of a "spatial gift" through a VPA or some other form of agreement. These exchanges often entail being subject to performance indicators that temporarily shift many responsibilities from landlords onto Brand X. In other words, as James explains, Brand X has to negotiate the demands of marketing campaigns for property development alongside its core mission of accepting any suitable space that could be made available to the arts.

James also believes that there is future scope for artists and creative organisations to take over the "shiny shopfronts" offered by new apartment developments. These commercial venues often remain empty for several years before finding willing tenants. They are, therefore, possible spaces for use by the creative community, but it has tended to be unenthusiastic about such opportunities. While many in that community have a cultural preference for crumbling warehouses over more upscale shopfronts, shunning such venues when given the chance to use them is often unwise for those whose artistic practice could be usefully accommodated in such spaces.



SQUAREPEG STUDIOS

squarepegstudios.com.au

Venue Address

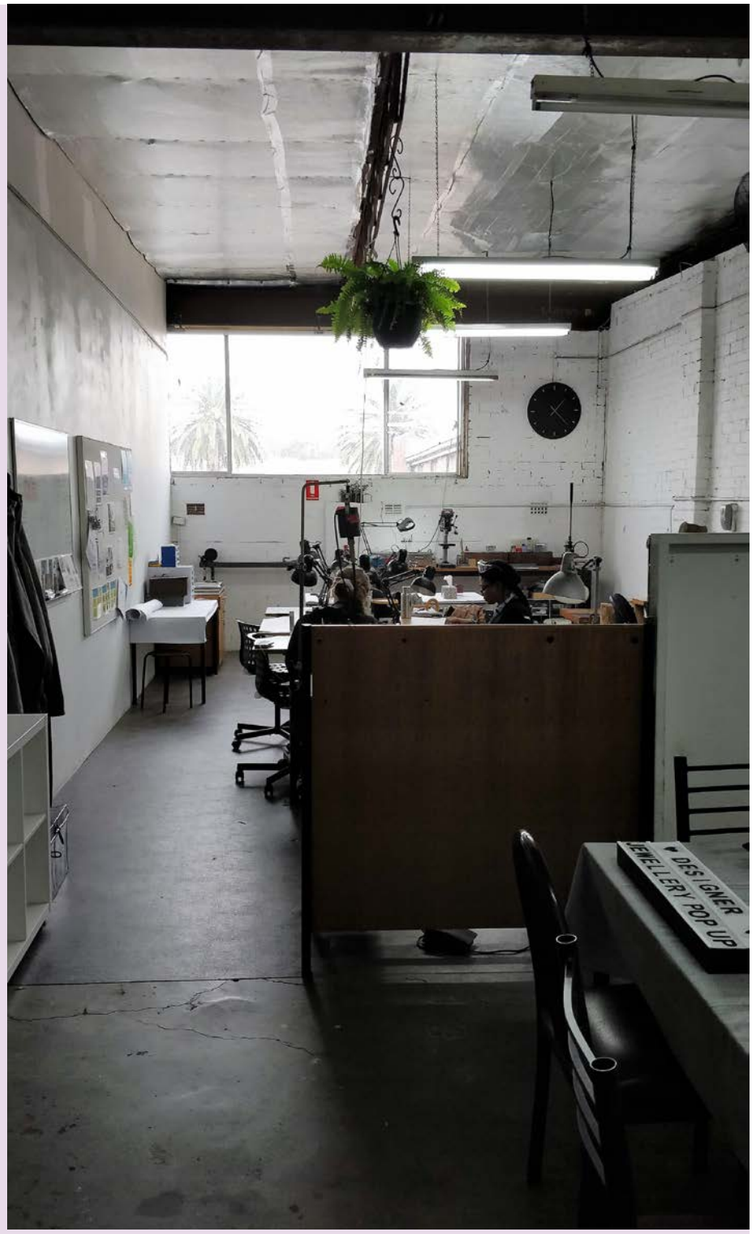
10 Junction Street, Marrickville NSW 2204

General Facts

SquarePeg Studios is a collaborative jewellery workshop in Marrickville. Inspired by other similar initiatives, founder Brenda Factor originally imagined a shared workshop that would lend itself to being used by professional contemporary jewellers, sharing heavy equipment that would be too expensive or unsuitable for installation in homes. The model was already in place in venues such as Gaffa Precinct, a collaborative studio in the City of Sydney, and Gray Street Workshop, now a thirty-year-old jewellery residency space in Adelaide.

The original SquarePeg Studios was founded in 2011 after a trip to New York, where Brenda had observed other similar spaces. While the main goal was to provide affordable studios and shared facilities to its members, SquarePeg Studios was also conceived as a community. In this sense, it has been from the beginning also a jewellery school, and now offers a rich schedule of classes, targeted both to beginners and expert jewellers wanting to learn specific techniques or how to use particular professional equipment.

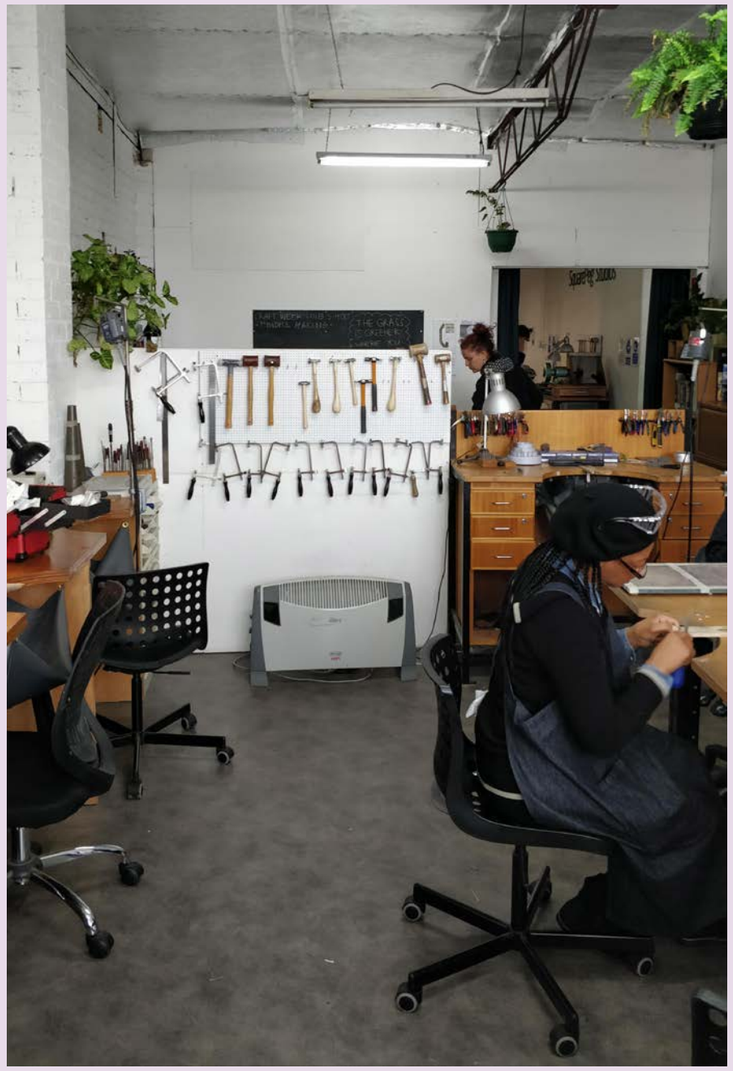
Brenda's original vision was also to have a graduate program, providing free studio space and mentorship to jewellers recently out of school for their professional development. Using a competitive selection process, the program has been very successful, with many residency recipients staying in SquarePeg Studios as tenants after the end of their graduate period. The program has also been acknowledged and supported by the Sydney College of the Arts, which has donated a working bench and jewellery tools belonging to the late Margaret West, a renowned artist and jeweller from Sydney.



As of October 2018, all of SquarePeg's 12 studios are occupied by jewellers, and one additional space is used by the graduate resident. The shared workshop and equipment can also be used by external jewellers, who hire the space on a casual basis, for classes, and for manufacturing techniques that require specific tools. The business model is completed by a pop-up store and exhibition space that is set up on special occasions, such as the Sydney Craft Week organised by the Australian Design Centre, the Inner West Open Studios Trail, and on the first Friday of

most months, to coincide with openings at AirSpace projects. The pop-up exhibition allows tenants to sell their jewellery through SquarePeg, providing income and exposure and an opportunity to connect with the public.

Our informants, Kim Elliott and Emily Copp, have been the co-directors of SquarePeg studios since December 2017. Kim started her career with a Creative Arts degree, and worked in film and theatre production for several years. She then moved into design and rediscovered an earlier interest in jewellery, leading her to Brenda's original SquarePeg studio about six years ago, where she progressed from being a casual to a permanent tenant. Emily, on the other hand, came to SquarePeg in 2015 through the graduate resident program after studying at the Enmore Design Centre. Since then, she has based her jewellery practice within SquarePeg Studios, but has also maintained a teaching role at University of New South Wales (UNSW) Arts and Design. In 2017, Kim and Emily, already actively involved in the management of SquarePeg's operations, took up the opportunity to purchase the business from Brenda, who had decided to retire. The purchase was completed in November 2017.

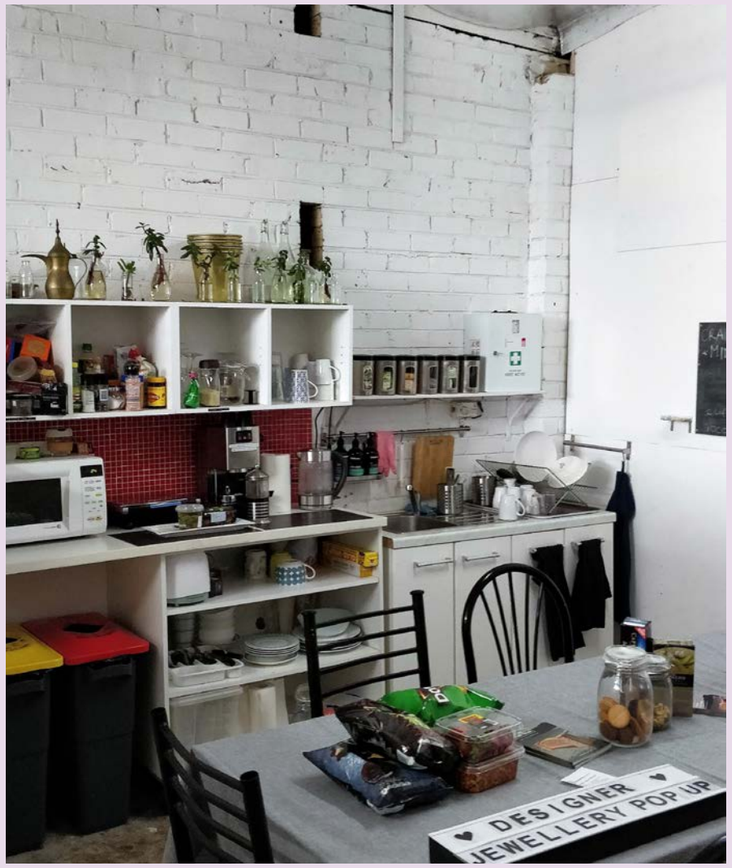


The Venue

SquarePeg Studios first location was on Alice Street in Newtown. The original building was a loft-style, multi-storey warehouse, which was demolished to build apartments. As Kim and Emily recall, it was not easy for Brenda to discover a similar space in the Newtown area, and it took many months to finally find the current warehouse in Marrickville. Even then, the space was too large for SquarePeg Studios alone, but Brenda's partner, Sally Clarke, decided to take up half of the lease for her experimental gallery, Airspace Projects (see case study on p. 42). The space was eventually partitioned to host both the gallery and the jewellery workshop.

Before SquarePeg Studios moved in, the warehouse had been used as storage for beer casks. The space was nonetheless suitable for the kinds of activity that would normally take place in a jewellery workshop: it was large enough, with great light and sturdy finishes. With the addition of a kitchenette and further partitions to separate the shared workshop from the studios, some changes were made to the organisation of the space, but the warehouse did not require major refitting and renovation. In the future, Emily and Kim plan to make some additional changes, both aesthetic and functional, such as the reconfiguration of the shared dining area, the improvement of the extraction system, and the renovation of an unused section of the building to create additional space for the graduate residency program.

There are challenges that come from working in an old warehouse, especially considering that the business model of SquarePeg Studios is mainly based on renting out studio space to jewellers and workshop space



to jewellery teachers. While both Brenda, and later Emily and Kim, have successfully managed to make the whole space welcoming and effective, issues with the thermal insulation of the building are hard to tackle. It means that there are periods of the year in which the workshop is either very cold or very hot, not only discouraging some possible tenants, but also affecting the quality of the work environment that SquarePeg Studios strives to offer its community of jewellers.

The Neighbourhood

Located in an area of Marrickville that features residential plots and pockets of light-industrial sites, with both small and large warehouses, SquarePeg Studios is conveniently located within walking distance from the Marrickville train station, soon to be upgraded as part of the Sydney Metro project. This position has guaranteed excellent accessibility, in addition to the relative ease of finding a parking space in the surrounding low-density area. Importantly, some neighbouring businesses — a metal supplier and two casting houses — are connected to the jewellery supply chain, adding to the locational advantage.

The main neighbour of SquarePeg Studios is (obviously) Airspace Projects, which shares more or less half of the same warehouse. This relationship has always been very productive, because Brenda and Sally co-ran the two initiatives. When they both retired, Airspace Projects became an artist-run-initiative, with about 13 partners. For this reason, it has been harder for Emily and Kim, in the year since their takeover of the site, to re-establish the kind of mutual alignment that the two operations once had. However, once the transition phase is over, they hope to engage more effectively with their neighbours regarding events and shared activities that capitalise on their shared interests and close proximity.

SquarePeg Studios has also always been involved in broader community activities. Some of them were organised by the local council, such as the IWOST — Inner West Open Studio Trail (formerly MOST — Marrickville Open Studio Trail); others by the Australian Design Centre, such as the Sydney Craft Week. Pop-up community initiatives also stem from the jewellers themselves. In this sense, our informants believe that they are part of a broader network of creative organisations located in the LGA. However, some of the connections of this network remain underutilised, since the amalgamation of Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville into the Inner West Council has yet to produce a shared sense of belonging across what is now a much larger and more dispersed creative

Emily and Kim have noticed an increase in engagement with Council more recently, with frequent communications about planned activities and wider opportunities to promote their business through Council's channels.



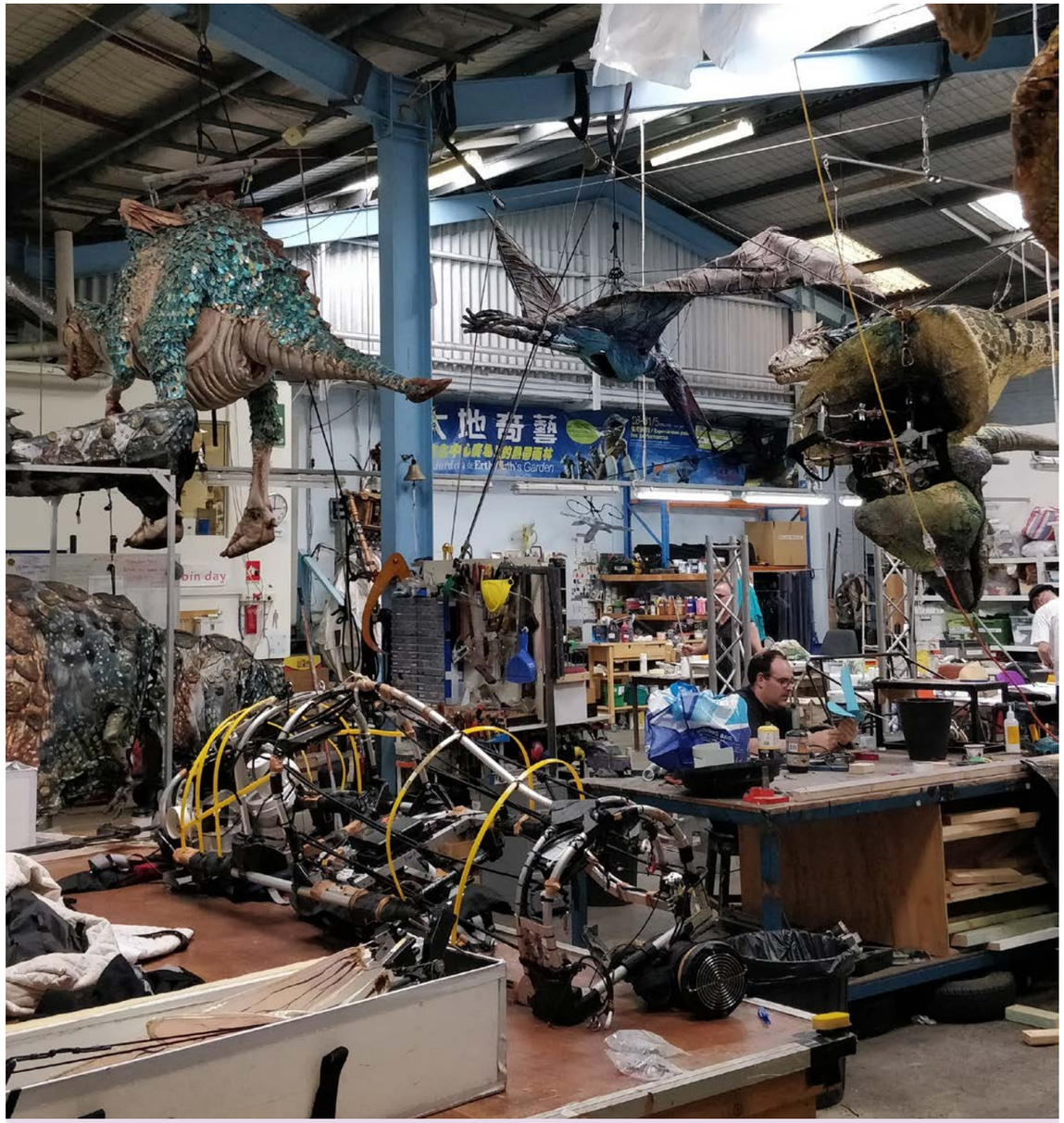
community. However, Emily and Kim have noticed an increase in engagement with Council more recently, with frequent communications about planned activities and wider opportunities to promote their business through Council's channels.

Pressure Points

When Emily and Kim purchased SquarePeg Studios, their greatest concern was its financial viability. In particular, they feared that it would be hard to fill the studio spaces with the number of tenants that would be needed to make SquarePeg Studios sustainable. They made considerable efforts in advertising the studios and jewellery classes, and effective marketing and advertising remain the greatest challenge for Emily and Kim, neither of whom are experts in these areas of communication.

One year into their undertaking, the business has proven to be viable, but the co-directors still employ a great deal of their time planning and marketing the activities of SquarePeg Studios, leaving little time to attend to their own creative practice or to the wider creative community within the Inner West. In particular, they find that participating more actively in the creative climate of the area is difficult given the time constraints imposed by the exhaustive application procedures required for any government-related activity. In the future, they would like to open SquarePeg Studios to the wider community, for example with workshops and classes targeted to refugees, newly arrived migrants, or domestic violence victims from women's shelters.

Lastly, another challenge comes from the stability of their tenancy. Emily and Kim originally only took the lease for one year, not knowing whether the business would work. While now renegotiating a new lease, hopefully on a longer term basis, there is always the possibility that the warehouse will be sold to a developer to build apartments. Only one street away (on Carrington Road), property giant Mirvac had recently proposed a zoning change to demolish the warehouses and build more than 2000 residential units. Opposition from the local community and from the Inner West Council contributed to a rejection of the planning proposal, but the area remains in the firing line for new developments, given its proximity to the future Sydney Metro station. Additional apartments and commercial spaces are not something that Kim sees as necessarily negative for the area, with the possibility of increasing business opportunities, provided that creative venues such as SquarePeg Studios are retained in the process of neighbourhood transformation.



ERTH

erth.com.au

Venue Address

22-26 Myrtle Street, Marrickville NSW 2204

General Facts

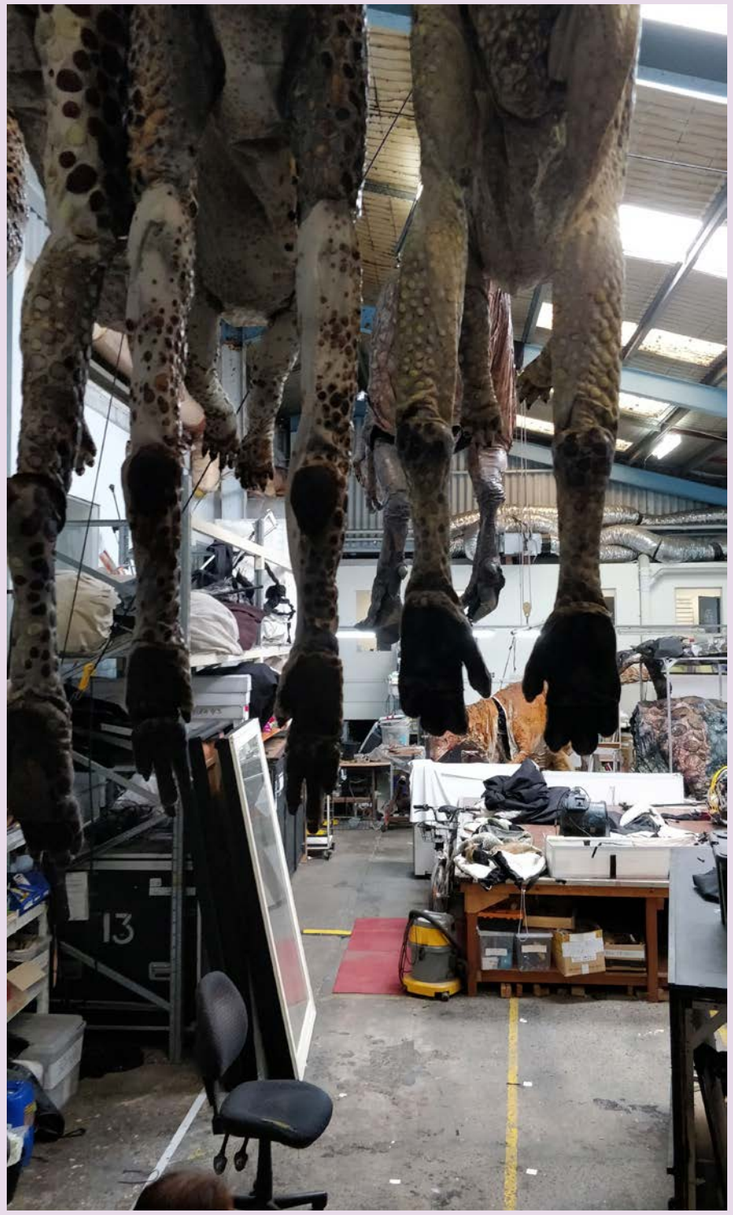
Erth is an international theatre company specialising in live performances and large-scale puppetry shows. Founded in 1990 by a group of artists in Ballarat, Victoria, the company originally produced street theatre at a time when this art form was part of a very popular countercultural movement. Erth then collaborated with activists and organisations like Greenpeace, and participated in protests and events such as the Next Wave Festival — a youth art festival in Victoria.

In 1994, Erth moved to Sydney, where it expanded its range of spectacular puppetry to include aerial shows, culminating in its participation in the 2000 Sydney Olympics Opening Ceremony. Gradually, at the end of that decade, Erth's productions shifted from street to indoor theatre. The Global Financial Crisis of 2008/2009, as well as other global events, including military conflicts, that reduced the possibility of international commissions and



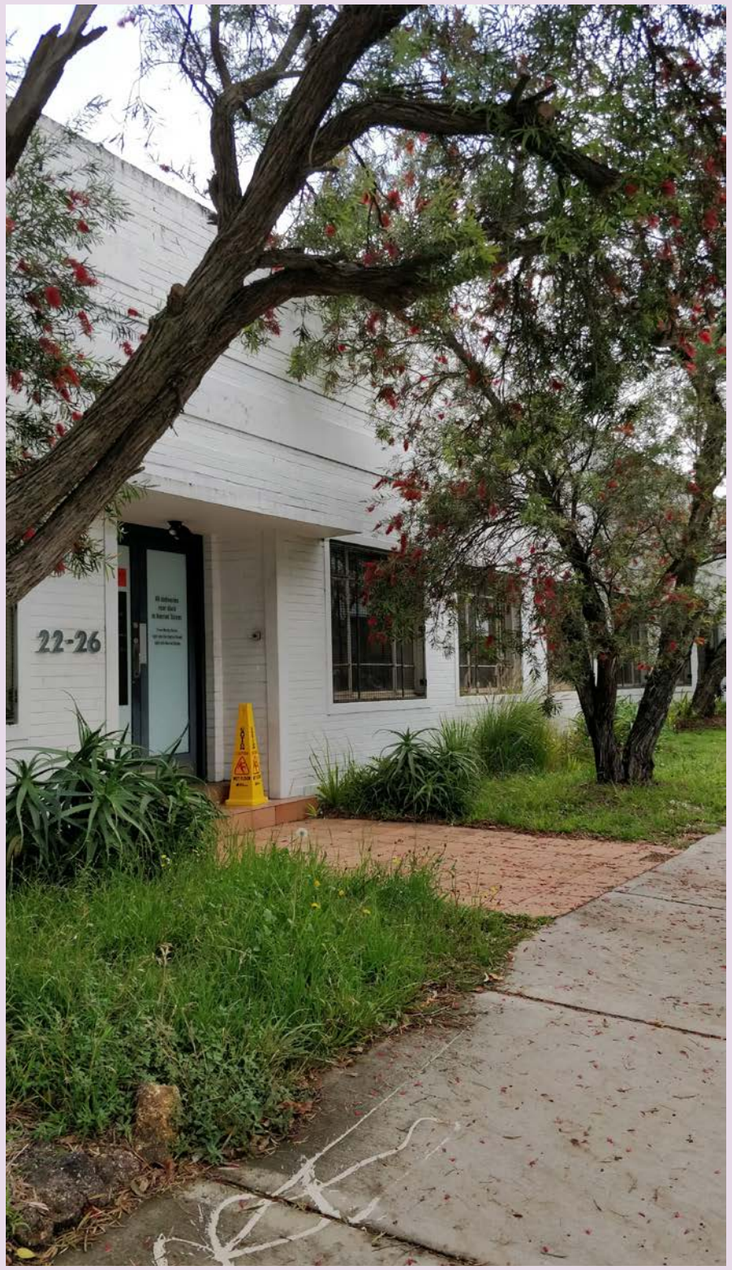
touring, meant that Erth had to reinvent itself. It had to find new avenues of performance, resulting in more productions bringing physical theatre and puppetry shows to museums and other cultural institutions. Starting with the Melbourne Museum in Victoria, where its visionary director, George F. MacDonald, suggested a show with dinosaurs, Erth has since worked with several natural museums globally, specialising in the design of dinosaur puppets and shows. Erth's puppets (both Jurassic and Cretaceous) are still visible in the Australian Museum in Sydney, the Melbourne Museum, the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. Whilst extinct animals now constitute about 65 per cent of the company's work, Erth still creates a wide range of creatures and installations for local and international events.

Erth is an incorporated association. It has never received core funding from federal or state institutions, and so constantly needs to look for work or single-project funding through grants and commissions. This is a very time-consuming process, given that Erth still works with a very lean core team of three directors (Executive, Artistic and Head of Design), an Operations Manager, Executive Producer, and four direct employees. Our informant, Sharon Kerr, is its Executive Director, and she was one of the three co-founders of Erth in 1990 (along with Scott Wright and Steve Howarth). Before starting the company, the group had also been part of a dance company. Over time, Sharon's role has evolved from a creative to a managerial one, but she is still fully involved in the theatrical performances when time allows.



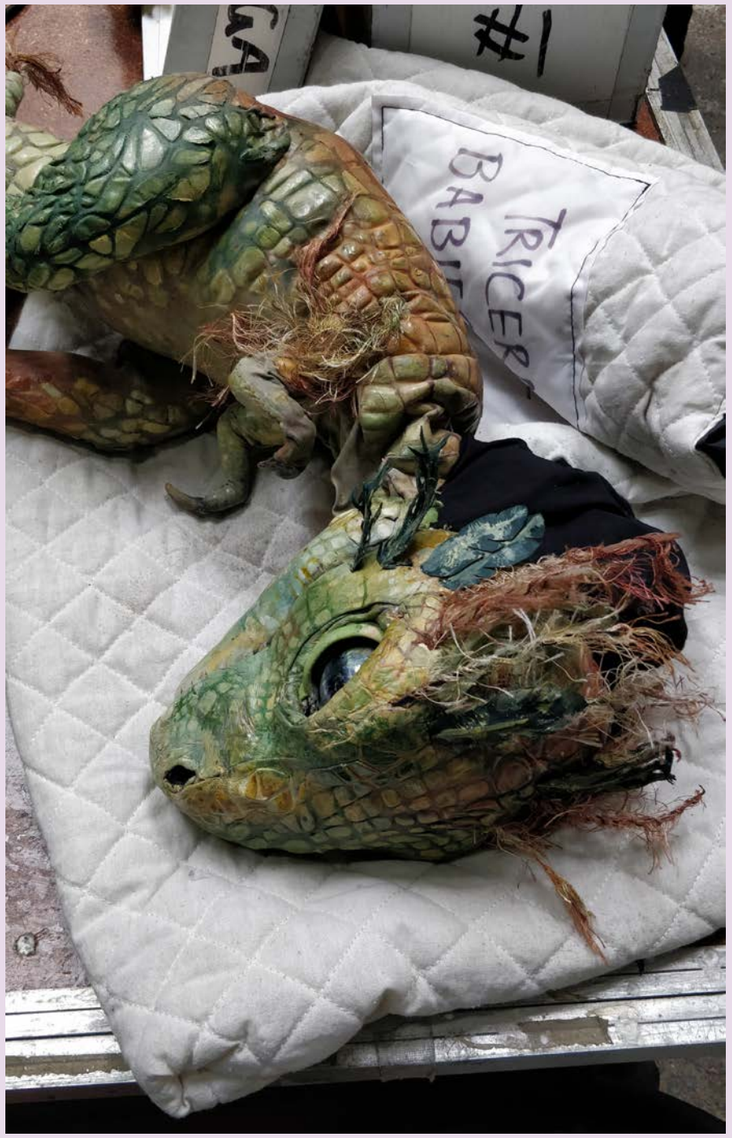
The Venue

Having left Ballarat, the 1994 move to Sydney meant that, for quite some time, Erth did not have a proper space for the construction of puppets and rehearsal of shows. For almost four years, the three directors worked from their living rooms and only occasionally hired special venues. Eventually, they found a space in Eveleigh, in a warehouse with very basic amenities that would later become Carriageworks. At the time, the venue was managed by the Belvoir Theatre and was almost utterly bare, with little servicing, ply partitions and demountable toilets. The high ceilings and the availability of space, however, made it perfect for creating the large-scale puppetry and aerial shows in which Erth specialises.



During the 2000 Sydney Olympics, part of the railway workshops site was used for this global sports event, which brought new attention to the venue. After a process of community consultation, the site was developed by the NSW Government through Arts (now Create) NSW. At that time, Erth had to leave the building temporarily and relocate for about three years. Sharon remembers that it was a difficult time given the constraints of not having a stable venue for the space- and the time-intensive work of large-scale puppet creation. However, when Carriageworks launched in 2007 as NSW's cornerstone performing arts centre, the company was readmitted to the renovated site, and invited to become one of its resident companies. While the space within the new Carriageworks precinct was reduced in size, and soon reached capacity, being a resident company was a great advantage. Eventually, however, Carriageworks decided to give the Erth workshop space a more public-facing profile, and to use it for different purposes. Erth had to vacate and find a suitable alternative venue, somewhere close enough to the city and with the high ceilings of an industrial building.

Sharon and the other directors soon realised that being located in this kind of space was not financially sustainable. They could afford a small venue, but that would have reduced the scope of Erth's productions. A bigger venue, however, was beyond their means. They came up with the idea of renting a larger warehouse and sharing the costs of the studio and workshop space with other creative organisations. At the time, they conducted informal scoping research to understand if there was enough interest in light-industrial spaces, and learned that one of the most in-demand studio spaces in the Inner West was undergoing important managerial changes, and that many creative organisations were planning to leave the space. After 18 months of research,



Erth finally committed to renting the space, where it has now been for almost three years. The building, a modern warehouse on Marrickville's southern edge, used to be a venetian blinds factory and, before that, the Zip hot water heater factory. To make it a suitable working space, significant investment was made in the building, including painting, carpeting and a general clean-up. Most importantly, Erth had to build the partitions that would allow multiple artists to work together, but with privacy.

The building, a large open-space brick warehouse with administration offices on one end and a truck-loading area on the other, now hosts more than ten tenants. These are mostly involved in creative productions, except for a construction company and a business software company. Whilst these creative organisations work independently and seldom collaborate, Sharon believes that their like-mindedness makes the cohabitation easier, because they understand and tolerate the by-products of light-industrial operations. Erth occupies the main section of the warehouse, about 40 per cent of the space, and part of the office facilities. Other studios are still available and are advertised on creativespaces.net.au, the City of Melbourne's online aggregator of creative venues.

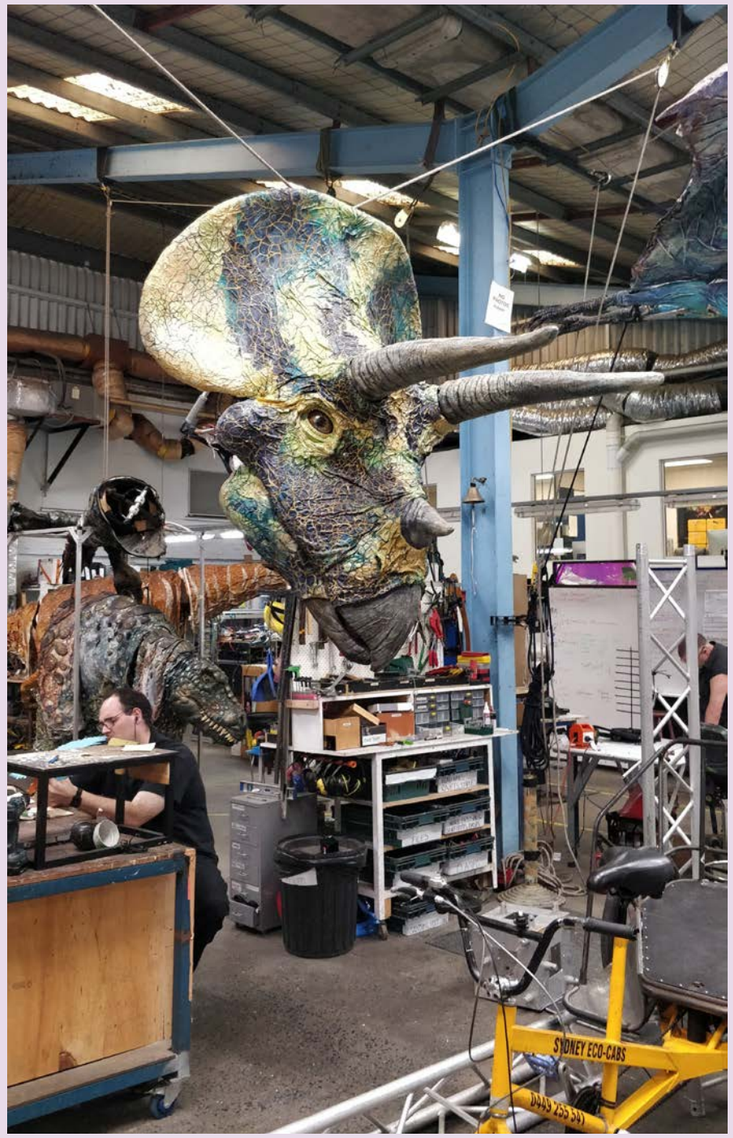
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The Neighbourhood

Like other case study venues covered in this report, Erth's warehouse is located in an urban area that features low-density housing and several light-industrial sites and storage facilities. Marrickville station is only five minutes away, providing convenient public transport access by train, while several bus services pass close by. Other creative organisations are scattered around the area, from art galleries to pottery studios. Being in Marrickville also means that many of Erth's suppliers are still in close proximity, since this network of businesses was created during the company's residency at Carriageworks in Eveleigh. These businesses are mostly located in the southern end of the city, in neighbourhoods such as Mascot, Rosebery, Alexandria and Rockdale, and Erth's current warehouse is well connected to all of them.

Erth's relationship with the surrounding creative network is not, however, as developed as it might be. Whilst the company is aware of Marrickville's artistic hub, has recently been part of the Open Studio trail, and is involved with local schools, the cost of setting up has hampered its capacity to engage more extensively with creative and educational organisations at this stage.



Pressure Points

There are two main issues facing Erth regarding its current venue. The first is that, in order to afford a suitable space, Erth has had to become a venue manager while remaining a physical theatre company. The overheads for Sharon and her small team have been substantial. From being a resident company at Carriageworks, where the facilities were managed by an umbrella organisation, Erth has become an umbrella organisation itself. In practical terms, it has taken up a range of additional responsibilities which, even if they are routine and unrelated to creative work — managing security, telephone lines, internet, cleaning, maintenance, and so on — absorb the precious time necessary, for example, to develop the grant applications through which new projects are launched. Being in an old warehouse, moreover, has added a further level of responsibility for maintenance, in this case because the building floods during heavy rains in the basement (storage) area. No remedy has yet been found for this problem.

A second significant challenge faced by Erth is shared by other warehouses and light-industrial sites in the neighbourhood. A demolition clause is included in the 3+3 year lease, as the area is zoned for residential development. Having invested so much in making the building suitable for the company and its tenants, Sharon fears that another move would endanger Erth's productive capacities and viability.



AIRSPACE PROJECTS

www.airspaceprojects.com.au

Venue Address

10 Junction Street, Marrickville
NSW 2204

General Facts

The story of Airspace Projects is rather different from that of many artist-run-initiatives in Sydney. While many ARIs discontinued or were transformed into less experimental and more commercial establishments, Airspace Projects started as a private initiative and was only incorporated as a not-for-profit association of artists as recently as 2017.

Airspace Projects began when Sally Clarke and Brenda Factor took the lease of the Junction Street Warehouse in 2014. About half of the building was transformed into a collaborative jewellery workshop (SquarePeg — see case study p. 33) run by Brenda, and the remainder was adapted into a gallery space where Sally launched an exhibition venue for emerging artists. She believed that Sydney needed a more diverse and affordable space to cater to the needs of artists attempting to establish their reputations, or experimenting with less commercial outputs. The first exhibition, *The Democracy of Drawing*, included more than 70 artists from a range of different backgrounds, locations, and career stages.

Since then, Airspace Projects has consistently offered a rich calendar of exhibitions, with two or three exhibitions a month, including solo, collective and group shows. Staying true to its original mission, Airspace charges very low fees to artists, only covering the costs of running the venue. Commission rates on exhibition sales are 25 per cent, much lower than the usual 40 per cent average charged by commercial galleries. These rates preserve the diversity of the artists showing at Airspace Projects, encouraging emerging artists to exhibit alongside those who are more established. Sally's vision was to create much more than a venue for exhibiting art, with a network and platform for creative ideas. The success of this approach is demonstrated by many artists continuing to return to Airspace Projects, even after establishing their own careers and practices.

In 2017, both Sally and Brenda decided to retire and relocate outside Sydney, and left their respective organisations to some of the creatives whom they had cultivated over the years. Sally, in particular, approached several artists who had exhibited at Airspace Projects, and asked them to take over the organisation.



This is when Airspace became an incorporated, artist-run association of 14 creatives. The relationships that Sally had created were vital to the continuation of the initiative, and the artists who decided to continue Airspace Projects felt that there still was a need in Sydney for the kind of exhibition space and community of which they had been a part.

Our informants are the three coordinators of Airspace Project. Anie Nheu studied alongside Sally at COFA, UNSW. She has a full-time job at the State Library, but decided to join the Committee because she felt that other galleries in Sydney were not as inclusive as Airspace Projects. Anie was joined by Helen Amanantiadis, who also practises as a lawyer. Her expertise was fundamental to establishing the legal framework of the ARI. The last member to join the core team was Paula do Prado, who was approached by Sally after an exhibition in 2016. During their first year as coordinators, Anie, Helen and Paula felt that





they have learnt a lot. However, it has been an incredibly time-consuming effort, given that the management of Airspace Projects comes on top of their day jobs and other responsibilities.

The Venue

Airspace Projects is located in the other half of the warehouse occupied by SquarePeg Studios. This section is on two levels, and has access to the backyard of the building. The coordinators believe that this part of the building was mainly used as a garage and storage space, given the large roller doors on the front. The unusual partitioning of the venue, and its different heights, mean that Airspace Projects can offer varied exhibition spaces. Galleries One and Two are at street level, and can be accessed directly from the roller doors. The Cranny is a long, narrow corridor connecting the basement level of the warehouse to its front.

Deep Space is a wide multifunctional room in the basement that can be used as additional gallery space, but it is also where creative workshops and artists' talks are held. At one end of the room, a small exhibition stall accommodates one of the ancillary initiatives of Airspace Projects, Airseum, which Paula described as 'Sydney's smallest museum'. At the other end of the room, a set of shelves displays Airsupplies, handmade products and Airspace-branded gadgets available for sale. On the same level, a kitchenette and other ancillary spaces complete the functional spaces of the gallery.

There two additional, smaller spaces, the first a shelter in the backyard, where Airspace Projects is planning to host an artist-in-residence. Though small, the space could become a useful studio or workshop. Second, the front of the building has been used recently to showcase a new exhibition program called Flag Space. Established and emerging artists are invited to create a flagpiece to hoist on a pole above the main entrance, challenging the symbolic norms of national flag-bearing.

For the future, the coordinators would like to improve the space, especially the accessibility of the lower level of the gallery. They are also open to suggestions coming from the community of artists that revolve around Airpace Projects, in order to preserve the gallery's capacity to satisfy the exhibition needs that are not currently being met by other institutions.

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The Neighbourhood

Located on a block that features both two-storey warehouses and freestanding, single-storey houses, the neighbours of Airspace Projects are Marrickville residents and a few light-industrial companies, including SquarePeg's workshop. Both Sally and the new coordinators have enjoyed a good relationship with all of these neighbours. In particular, they have been involved in outreach activities, such as Emotion, a biennial street festival featuring kinetic art and light projections that involve the neighbouring buildings. This in an occasion when local residents become active participants in the activities of Airspace Projects. Another such occasion is the Council-organised Open Studio Trail, in which the gallery has often participated.

However, Anie, Helen and Paula believe that the various creative hubs in the Inner West LGA are not as connected as they could be. Because they are not within walking distance of each other, and public transport does not connect these hubs conveniently, the creative precincts of Marrickville, Sydenham, Annandale, Leichhardt and St Peters do not communicate with each other as much as they could and should.

Pressure Points

Being in its first year as an incorporated association (at the time of writing), the challenges for Airspace Projects have been numerous. The financial sustainability of the operation has constituted just one of many legal, organisational, and curatorial difficulties that the coordinators have encountered since taking over Airspace Projects from Sally. These issues are complicated by the fact that the Committee members, as noted above, need to maintain their other jobs in addition to running the ARI.

As part of this transformation from private initiative to an ARI, the Committee has also started a broader dialogue with the local Council, because some of the pressures on the gallery relate to the accessibility of the space and the lack of some basic services, such as garbage removal. Our interviewees also felt that improved public transport connectivity between creative precincts would enhance events like the Inner West Open Studios Trail.

Like many non-commercial galleries, Airspace Projects runs on very limited financial resources, with which it successfully manages a diverse exhibition program. Because of cash flow limitations, there is little insurance against unexpected events, including the possibility that the owner of the building may decide to redevelop it into apartments, which would leave Airspace Projects in need of a new venue.



MESS WITH IT

www.facebook.com/messwithit

Venue Address

6 Sloane Street, Marrickville NSW 2204

General Facts

Mess with It (MIT) is a collaborative studio hosted in a warehouse in Marrickville. The origin of this creative venue is intertwined with its founder's journey as an artist and creative practitioner. Camilla Lawson was juggling her art and several casual jobs to support her children when she was offered the opportunity to curate the decorations of the Peats Ridge Festival, an Australian sustainable arts and music festival that was held annually in Glenworth Valley, some seventy kilometres north of Sydney. With an annual budget of ten thousand dollars — one half as income, and the other as budget for the decorations — Camilla worked for the festival for almost a decade, learning to manage tight budgets, acquiring organisational skills, and gradually specialising in the art of event decorations.

At the time, she was working out of a friend's warehouse in Newtown, paying a small rent, and in another warehouse in St Peters, in which the company running the festival had its headquarters. After that company went bankrupt in 2012, Camilla kept working in the festival organisation scene, curating community art initiatives and decorating numerous festivals, including, most recently, Parramatta Lanes. Her ambition, however, had always been to continue her own artistic production, and to share a studio with other creatives. Not long after the closing down of the Peats Ridge Festival, she decided that it was time to follow through with this idea, and started looking for warehouses in the Inner West.

In 2013, Camilla finally found the current warehouse and started to gather a community of artists and creatives around it. She knew that there was a hunger for this kind of communal studio, because many artists were being pushed out of the inner city, but also because life as a visual artist can be solitary and, therefore, many seek workspaces that encourage sociality. Her plan was to rent the full building and to create studios and shared facilities for a community of creative co-workers.

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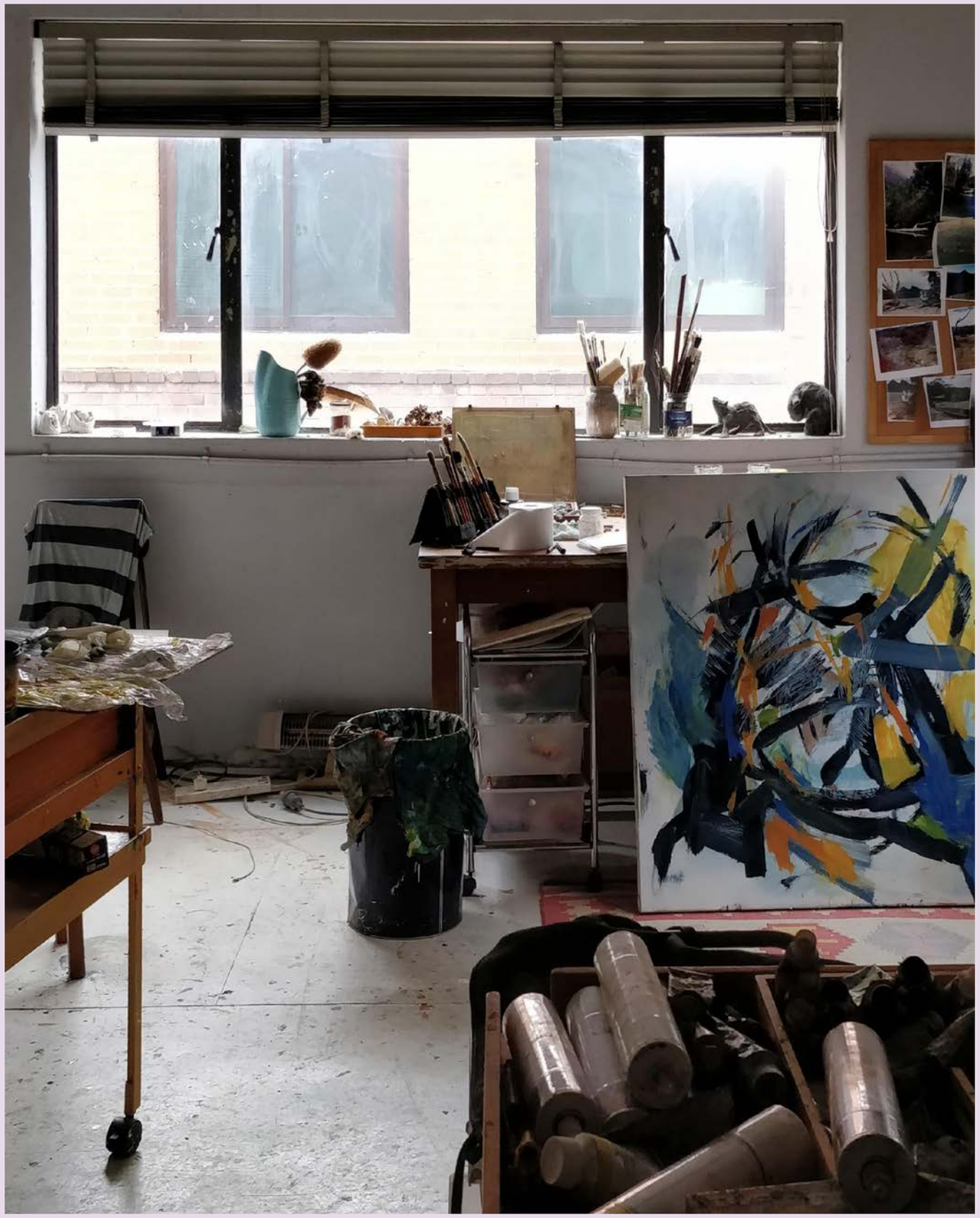


Initially, Camilla's tenants were friends, painters and printmakers. Soon after the opening, through word-of-mouth and classified ads, they were joined by a wave of costume makers, sculptors, jewellers, prop makers, and other light-industrial creatives. Workshop-based practitioners have mostly moved elsewhere, to more suitable venues for them, and Mess with It mainly houses painters, designers, and photographers. However, some small manufacturing still takes place in the building, ranging from printmaking to sewing.

As the years pass and it becomes more difficult for single artists to afford studio space, the spatial organisation of the warehouse is changing. Some of the tenants are now sub-subletting their rooms to other creatives in order to alleviate the financial pressure of the rent. They do so by adding desks or additional facilities to their own studios. Camilla has observed that there is also a generational side to this trend. The artists who have recently joined Mess with It are younger women, subtenants of older, more established female artists who are mentors while sharing their studios.

In addition to managing the shared studio, our interviewee, Camilla, still runs her own event decoration practice, working across Greater Sydney and beyond. Having a background in science, her work combines an artistic sensibility with her scientific understanding of the world.





The Venue

A two-storey warehouse dating back to the 1930s, the venue that Camilla rents for Mess with It is set among other industrial buildings in an area of Marrickville that features several production facilities as well as artist-run spaces. The building, about 530sqm, has a small front door on the main street, and a rear loading door on the back lane. With the adjacent warehouse, it used to be a factory producing calibration weights. It was then used by the current owner, who owns a stationery business and used the facility to run his business and to store manila folders. When he moved out, a series of other businesses occupied the warehouse, until Camilla signed a medium-term lease to create her shared studio.

Having found the right spot, Camilla used her mathematical knowledge to model the optimal subdivision of the space in order to engineer its spatial and financial sustainability. Step by step, she partitioned the building and adapted it to the needs of the painters and creatives who moved in. She also invested money and time in making the building comply with local regulations.

At the moment, MIT is not registered as an incorporated association, although Camilla would like to take a step towards the formalisation of the community that exists within the building. However, she explains, so many artists and creatives have only just crossed the survival line, herself included, and, therefore, have little time to be involved in additional activities. So, whilst networks of collaboration exist — and Camilla herself contracts some of her co-workers in the decoration projects that she spearheads — MIT is still an organic, informal community gathered around the availability of space in a Marrickville warehouse.

The Neighbourhood

When looking for a space to start her shared studio, Camilla knew that she wanted it to be in the Inner West. Having worked in Newtown and St Peters, and lived in Erskineville, her networks were local, and so were the artists who would eventually move in. Therefore, Marrickville was always high on the list of desirable locations, given the availability of former industrial spaces and the relatively cheaper rents.

The industrial neighbourhood where MIT is located, north of Sydenham station, is one of the two main industrial precincts of Marrickville (the other one being Carrington Road). This area, once known as the Tramvale Estate, brims with creative studios, co-working facilities, bespoke production companies and many other factories that share the remaining industrial capacity of the city. As an example, MIT is surrounded by abattoirs, food-processing companies, typographic factories, breweries, and smallgoods import-export facilities. Camilla notes that, in this diverse, dynamic landscape, underground artists and creative organisations work, with few residents knowing about this aspect of the industrial site's operations.

However, the remaining industrial capacity of the neighbourhood was also in some ways problematic. When she moved in the warehouse, Camilla had to negotiate MIT's relationship to those people and organisations already in the area. In particular, managing truck access to the narrow back lane was a difficult process requiring considerable diplomacy, given that some other tenants in neighbouring warehouses did not understand why a collaborative creative studio would need loading accessibility. Over the years, however, Camilla has managed to establish a harmonious relationship with her back-lane neighbours, and now enjoys a good bond with all of them.

Camilla's relationship with the local Council is also very positive. Having worked in what used to be the Inner West Cultural Services in Newtown, she got to know some of the cultural officers in the former Marrickville Council, and has maintained a good connection with some of them. In her view, the Inner West Council has been very community-minded and supportive of the arts. However, she feels that, despite initiatives like the Open Studios Trail, many of the more experimental arts venues in the Inner West are unable to attract the attention of the Council, and rely on networks that cannot be engineered from above.

Pressure Points

Being in an old warehouse presents its challenges, such as sound insulation. Camilla herself still works with some heavy wood machinery, and other tenants also have small but noisy equipment in their studios. Shared space and propinquity demand constant noise management, while parts of the building, the ceilings in particular, are in need of repair and, ultimately, replacement. Camilla believes that, if she were a commercial tenant, the property/real estate manager would fix it, but they do not do so because it is deemed appropriate for artists to work in decaying warehouses.

Camilla is quite fortunate given the medium-term length of her tenancy. The building is owned by a superannuation fund, and so it is unlikely that it will be redeveloped or sold in the near future. Moreover, her tenancy contract does not include a demolition and redevelopment clause, which is rather unusual light of current real estate contractual arrangements in Sydney. However, Camilla fears that the area is going to be transformed in the next few years, meaning that she is already planning a relocation, this time out of town, to the Blue Mountains or south of Wollongong. She has made this decision because the tenacious, lively, creative community now in the area, Camilla believes, will soon be under the threat of redevelopment that will make it impossible for artists to remain there. She has already seen some neighbouring warehouses transformed into "creative spaces", meaning co-working offices for profit-driven creative industries (eg architects and designers) that are unaffordable for other categories of creatives who have much lower incomes.



RED RATTLER

www.redrattler.org

Venue Address

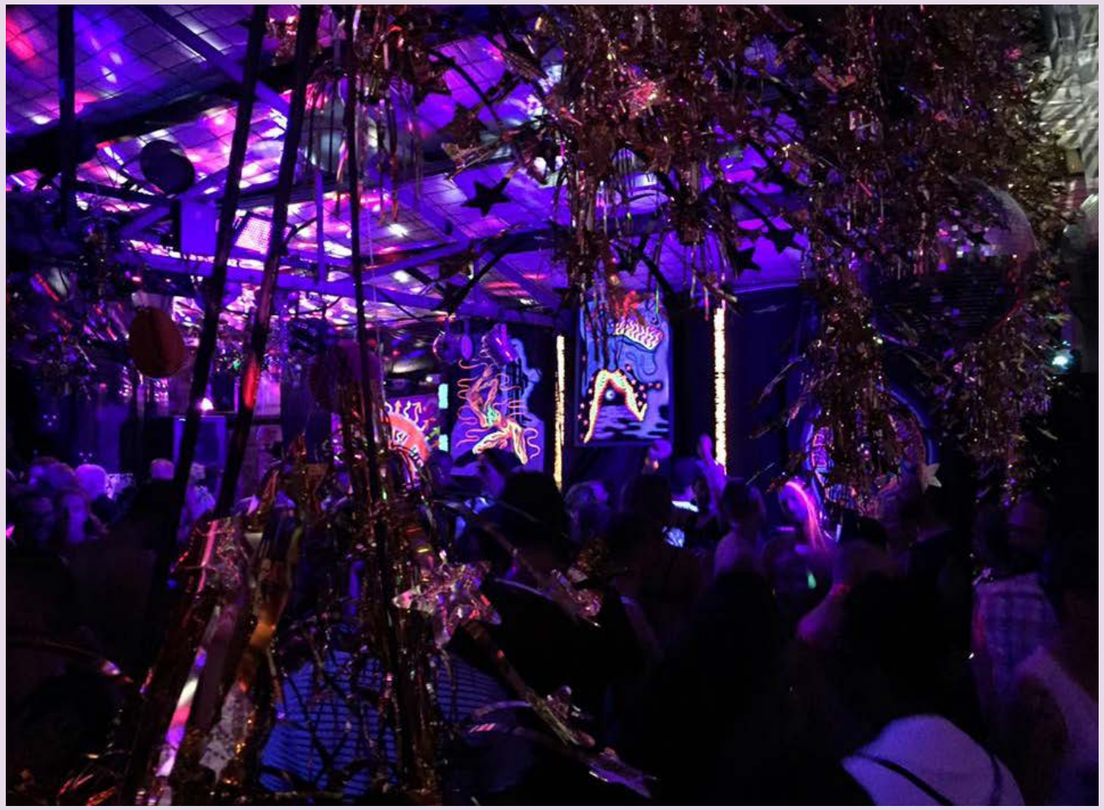
6 Faversham Street, Marrickville NSW 2204.

General Information

Red Rattler (The Rat) is a not-for-profit, artist-run warehouse in Marrickville. It offers space for performances, talks, and events to creative organisations and other entities whose mission aligns with Red Rattler's vision of a diverse, queer, sustainable artists' community.

The origins of Red Rattler lie in a group of five queer artists — the Rats — who decided to join forces and found a warehouse space that would support creativity without risking being redeveloped or shut down by the police. During the first decade of this century, they had all exhibited and performed in the illegal ARIs that were common across the City of Sydney and Inner West. As these squatted spaces and illicit warehouses started to disappear, the five Rats felt that the remaining commercial venues were not safe spaces for LGBTIQ+ crowds and performers with whom they interacted. After brief but thorough research, they found a warehouse in Marrickville and, in 2008, each signed a personal mortgage in effecting a collective purchase.

With the help of a committed network of volunteers, the founders invested their time and financial resources in transforming the warehouse into a suitable performance venue.



Having witnessed the closure of several warehouses for non-compliance with safety standards and other regulations, the founders wanted their venue to conform to the local development control plan and the Building Code of Australia (BCA). This aim involved retrofitting the building and implementing a detailed management plan for staff and volunteers, as is required by liquor and public performance licensing (at the time it was the Place of Public Entertainment (POPE) licence).

For the first five years, the founders were also on the Board of Directors of Red Rattler, which was a collective partnership. After a restructuring in 2013, Red Rattler became a not-for-profit incorporated arts association, with a rotating directorship that sets the strategic planning direction of the organisation. Over time, Red Rattler has been buying the venue back from the five original partners, which was the plan from its inception. By the end of 2019, the whole building is intended to be fully owned by the community of artists. To sustain this model, there is a three-tiered fee structure that charges different prices to its users, distinguishing between commercial, community and charity events. Additionally, guests are asked to make a 50 cent coin donation to improve the environmental sustainability the venue.

The busy calendar of events includes concerts, theatrical

By the end of 2019, the whole building is intended to be fully owned by the community of artists. To sustain this model, there is a three-tiered fee structure that charges different prices to its users, distinguishing between commercial, community and charity events. Additionally, guests are asked to make a 50 cent coin donation to improve the environmental sustainability the venue.

performances, fundraisers, film-shootings, and music parties. About 30 per cent of these events are queer-run or -focused. Staffing for these events is entirely based on the contribution of a core group of volunteers working as technicians, bartenders, bar/booking/social media managers, and so forth. Only a few crew members working in cleaning and security are paid by the organisation, and external staff members are contracted only when strictly necessary. In this sense, a plan for the near future is to improve Red Rattler's attendance capacity by recruiting additional volunteers who can assist as security staff.

In addition to performance activities, Red Rattler also runs a program called 'Rat Trap', whereby a subsidised studio is given to artists for up to three months in order to produce an artwork that will be performed or exhibited at the venue. To become part of Rat Trap, artists need to prepare an expression of interest and demonstrate that their profile and work match the venue's mission. Moreover, part of the building, which would otherwise be empty during the day, is rented out to artists' organisations as office space. More recently, a grant from Create NSW has allowed Red Rattler to run a performance program for queer people of colour.

Our interviewees are Teresa Avila and Bones Rock. Teresa, a filmmaker, recreational pilot and mechanical engineer, was one of the founders and the last to step down from the Board of Directors. While she now contributes only as a volunteer, Teresa's engineering background was crucial in designing the building retrofit to meet fire and sound standards. Bones is the most recent chairperson, replacing Teresa. With a diverse background and set of interests, she is committed to community systems and their relationships with buildings and venues.

The Venue

Located in the former Tramvale Estate, where other creative venues are housed in former industrial buildings, the two-storey warehouse dates back to the 1950s. Originally, it was a production facility for industrial heaters. When Red Rattler's founders purchased it, the venue was in good condition, but it had acquired a lot of industrial grime over the years. To restore it to a suitable state, the Rats and their friends volunteered their time — manually cleaning the walls, sanding the floors, and building the bar — and their technical skills. An architect helped with the design, and Teresa assisted in the area of soundproofing and fire-safety standards, while others offered gratis legal and financial expertise.

Retrofitting the building to make it regulation compliant, Teresa remembers, was a huge undertaking in relation to the small budget available. It took a year, but the result was a fully legal performance venue, equipped with pro-audio systems, a flexible open stage, backstage, toilets, entertainment rigging, and a licensed bar. The construction works included removing the asbestos ceiling, although it was not unsafe, and replacing it with a high-tech mechanical roof, which opens in case of fire, in accordance with Building Code of Australia (BCA) requirements.



Today, the 400sqm venue is mostly hired for live music and fundraising events. In addition to the downstairs space, which is mostly utilised for performances and film shoots, the first floor offers a rooftop garden which can also be hired for events. The main theatre can accommodate a maximum of 300 patrons, meaning that safety regulations have always been a burden, as the number of safety guards per person is calculated according to a formula applied to venues as different as a sports pub and a live-music theatre.



The Neighbourhood

When looking for a suitable venue, being in the Inner West was a priority for the Rats. They felt that the community of queer entertainers which they wanted to serve coalesced around Newtown and Marrickville. It was, therefore, very important to maintain that geographical proximity, as the artist-run spaces in the city were closing down and far fewer LGBTIQ+ safe venues were available for performing artists. Moreover, when the Rats moved into the area, most of the surrounding buildings were either still industrial or were managed by creative organisations. This was one of the reasons for the founders to buy the building, given that there were no nearby residential units whose occupants could complain about crowd and sound levels.

The relationship with the local Council has always been positive, and this support helped during the phase in which Red Rattler had to apply for a rezoning of the building in order to allow its new uses. However, Bones and Teresa feel that, in recent years, the City of Sydney has been more proactive in supporting artist-run spaces than its Inner West counterpart, which lacks an overall policy concerning creative venues. This difference is important because Red Rattler has become more visible in the live music scene, as has the Inner West more generally, following the demise of several performance venues in Kings Cross. This trend has put a lot of pressure on performance and rehearsal facilities in the area, which means that the support and direction arising from a clear live music policy would improve this situation.

Pressure Points

The main challenge facing the future of Red Rattler concerns the question of noise levels. Although the venue was designed to be regulation-compliant and specific building features were purposefully modelled to manage sound, including the presence of sound limiters, the risk of neighbours' complaints still looms large. In fact, during some performances, the Red Rattler was asked to lower the volume of the music, despite the fact that it was within the permissible threshold. This is why, at present, the management team is trying to build evidence of soundproofing compliance.

However, Bones and Teresa feel that this problem will only become worse in the future, as plans to transform the area into a residential and mixed-use precinct are already underway. Both the Sydenham Precinct Plan and the Victoria Road precinct plan are threats to the existence of Red Rattler. The more that residential neighbours start living on the other side of the street, the more complaints will eventuate, and the harder it will be for the venue to survive. In fact, the plan of mixing medium- to high-density residential blocks and creative venues places pressure on those existing performance facilities that were built with the blood, sweat and tears of volunteers. Further adjustments and attenuations of volume levels may not be possible, and performers might lose interest in using a performance space with such limitations. This will be a major loss for one of the few surviving live music precincts in metropolitan Sydney, and arguably its most important. Bones fears that compliance controversies like the one that affected LazyBones, a restaurant and live music venue on Marrickville Road, are a telling example of how noise complaints can affect a venue's ability to be at the forefront of the local music and arts scene.



NAUTI STUDIOS

nautistudios.com.au

Venue Address

152 Parramatta Road (Level 2)
Stanmore NSW 2048

General Information

Nauti Studios is a co-working space for creatives and small businesses located on the second level of an industrial building on Parramatta Road in Stanmore. It was started in 2014 by Natalie Cheney, who felt that there was a shortage of venues catering to the needs of professional creatives. After scoping a series of co-working spaces and workshops in the city, she realised that they were either targeted to high-end small businesses, and therefore not suitable for "messy" creative undertakings, or that they were too informal and chaotic, thus lacking a necessary degree of professionalism. The space that she had in mind would combine both flexibility and professionalism, while maintaining a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

Now in its fourth year of operation, Nauti Studios is an established space hosting more than 30 co-workers, ranging from designers, illustrators, photographers, seamstresses and carpenters to video-game makers, brand identity experts, IT consultants, videographers, sound engineers, and writers. The space is almost at full capacity, and whenever there is a vacant desk Natalie soon finds willing co-workers through word-of-mouth or advertising via the usual channels, such as Facebook, Gumtree and creativespaces.net.au. Not much business comes from more traditional office advertising because the mission of Nauti Studios is to create a venue that combines artists' studios, workshops, co-working and more conventional desk space. It is not, therefore, a standard co-working facility.

Moreover, Natalie purposefully "curates" the cohort of workers by ensuring that the gender balance is suitable, that people from non-English backgrounds are represented, and that the venue is an LGBTIQ+ safe space.

The advantages of working in a space like Nauti Studios are multiple. On the one hand, creatives who are involved in specific crafts have the freedom to produce their work without the spatial constraints of conventional commercial space, which they usually cannot afford anyway. On the other hand, small businesses that want a more creative and relaxed environment can benefit from this diverse workforce. Serendipitous collaborations take place as a result of being in the same space. Moreover, they benefit from the shared facilities (kitchen, meeting room, and playroom), and from the fact that Natalie assumes full responsibility for the management of the venue, relieving its users of all space-related overhead costs.

Our informant, Natalie, is the founder and director of Nauti Studios. After studying illustration and working as a photorealistic illustrator in Melbourne's Northcote creative precinct, she decided to relocate to Sydney after feeling that the area had progressively lost its edge, and many of its co-working venues shut down. Over time, she has had to relinquish her creative business, and her time is now fully dedicated to running the Parramatta Road venue, and, since 2017, another co-working facility at Hazelbrook in the Blue Mountains. At this second facility, Natalie has replicated the



Stanmore model, offering desks for casual hire as well as lockable studios and offices.



Being within the boundaries of the then Marrickville Council was one of Natalie's most important requirements. She felt that the area had an energetic creative network and that the Council had implemented several policies and initiatives that had benefited the local community of artists.

The Venue

While looking for a suitable space to replicate the kind of collaborative environment in which she had worked in Melbourne, Natalie found the Parramatta Road warehouse on a commercial real estate website. After convincing the owners and the agency that she was going to open a professional co-working space, she was offered a lease on the 540sqm top level of the three-storey building. She has recently expanded to part of the middle level, with the remainder of the building still occupied by a car repair shop.

The building has been in use for at least 80 years. Natalie found some old photos of the area, when Stanmore had many industrial operations, and recognised a series of warehouses with very





machines were built into the structure of the building and had to be cut out to make space for Nauti Studios. However, she has also been able to re- and upcycle most of the scraps and abandoned industrial remnants, using them to build the studios or as decorations that speak to the long productive history of the space.

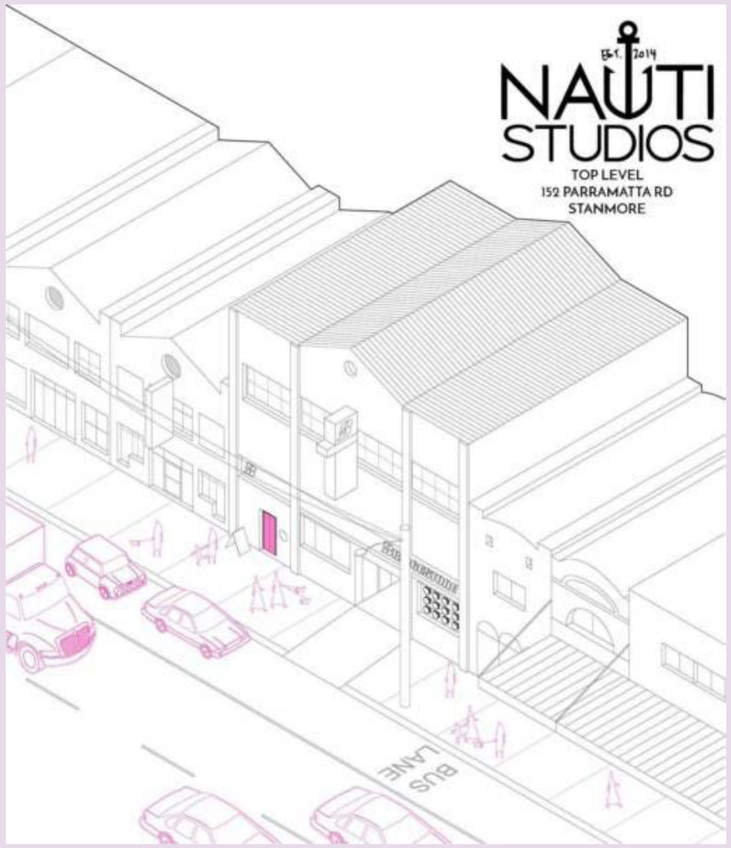
At the beginning, all these discarded objects were a challenge, because Natalie did not have the financial capability to hire a professional removal service. For this reason, she adopted an incremental strategy, gradually making the space suitable for occupation. She taught herself the basics of carpentry and started emptying out the venue section by section, as new tenants moved in. This strategy was also a response to market needs, as she created studios and spaces that suited the specific requests of new co-workers. An array of different spaces transpired, ranging in size from 9 to 24sqm, and with diverse features. In addition, she set up a series of communal facilities, including a lounge for relaxing and a meeting room.





similar features. She has also met a local who recalled working there, in what was at the time a multi-level car mechanic shop. Prior to that period, the building had been used for woodworking and as a leather workshop, producing footwear parts for renowned shoemakers such as R.M. Williams. More recently, the venue also housed a lampshade maker and a beads maker, as well as the offices of the downstairs car shop.

Legacies of these previous uses are scattered across the co-working space, with some of the remaining industrial elements posing a challenge to Natalie. For example, the leather working



The Neighbourhood

Being within the boundaries of the then Marrickville Council was one of Natalie's most important requirements. She felt that the area had an energetic creative network and that the Council had implemented several policies and initiatives that had benefited the local community of artists. As a result, most of Nauti Studios co-workers actually reside within the Inner West Council area, although some exceptions indicate that other parts of the city lack similar co-working spaces. The relationship with the Council has proven to be productive, with grants and initiatives often aligning with the needs and capacities of Nauti Studios. Like other venues, it has been part of the Open Studio Trail, and it will soon host an Indigenous residency program.

The venue is easily accessible via public transport (mainly bus), but its greatest advantage is being in close proximity to a series of back roads that allow easy parking. This accessibility is important because many of Nauti Studios' creatives need their cars and vans to move the equipment that they use for their arts and crafts such as photography or carpentry. Being on Parramatta Road, and on the top level of a building underneath an air corridor, means that tenants cannot be sound-sensitive. In fact, this is an advantage, because small industrial crafts can be quite noisy, and co-workers need to be tolerant of each other's activities.

Natalie's plans for further involvement in the local creative community recently received a boost after a forum organised by the Council. There she met some other venue managers, and decided to start an informal network to discuss the needs and opportunities for creative venue managers in the Inner West.

Pressure Points

Although Natalie feels that her tenancy in the Parramatta Road warehouse is quite secure, she has witnessed many similar buildings disappear over the last four years, replaced by medium-density apartments. Should that happen to her building, she feels that the new real estate, even with some non-residential spaces, would be very unlikely to meet the needs of her diverse cohort of workers. A street-level commercial space in a new building would be suitable as a conventional co-working space, but not for the informal, inexpensive studios that Natalie is currently able to offer, precisely because she is subletting an old warehouse.

The mooted redevelopment of Parramatta Road as a pedestrian-friendly boulevard, ostensibly planned by the State Government as a part of the WestConnex project, is also a possible threat. As Natalie explains, the availability of these low-budget warehouses on the road is due to Parramatta Road having been made into a clearway. Because of noise and traffic, many of the original tenants had to relocate, leaving empty spaces for artists and creatives in need of cheap rents. If the road is redeveloped according to these plans, rents would probably increase to the point of hollowing out the area of its creative workers. This change to Parramatta Road has been discussed for many years, and there is considerable scepticism as to whether it will eventuate, certainly in the form suggested in planning documents. However, Natalie has witnessed how the rezoning process has already allowed the demolition of several surrounding warehouses.



Discussion

Major Trends

The 11 case studies presented in this report enrich and expand on the trends and problem areas highlighted in the second City of Sydney report by our research team (Ang *et al*. 2018). The issues of affordability and suitability, in particular, emerged equally strongly in the Inner West and confirmed the difficulties that creative organisations and individuals face in maintaining and developing their venues in the context of a gentrifying city. However, research in the Inner West also offered a broader perspective on the strategies that space managers and operators adopt to increase their cultural capacity and address their spatial needs. Many organisations involved in this research study share a deep concern about the future of arts and culture if the pace and current direction of redevelopment continue.

TREND 1. GENTRIFICATION OF THE INNER WEST

Gentrification is a complex process and it affects cities in different ways. Even within the same urban area, distinct neighbourhoods may experience differences in the social, spatial and temporal qualities of gentrification waves (Lees *et al*., 2013). In Sydney's Inner West, this process has been fuelled by the state government's decision to consolidate and increase density along the main transport arteries that feed into the CBD, but also by a growing community of creative economy workers, whose activity has boosted the area's desirability.

Our case studies suggest that, while some artists and organisations have been pushed out of the inner city, for many the decision to locate themselves in the Inner West — despite its costs — was their preference for two interrelated reasons. First, the Inner West maintains a rich and diverse light-industrial sector, with existing supply chain links for creative industries. Second, with many of these industries having closed down, the Inner West has also had a wider range of warehouses for rent, offering cheaper prices and, often, larger facilities than the CBD or other inner-city suburbs. The traditional approach of local Council is also regarded as supportive of the arts, and so an influential factor in decisions to locate in the area. As one interviewee put it:

> *I chose to have it in this Council before Inner West Council was amalgamated – this was Marrickville Council – and I chose to have wherever I had my studio in Marrickville Council because I know they were very pro-arts and […] I just watched them over years do lots of really great stuff to support the creative community. And so I decided that if I was going to have a spot, I wanted to be in that sort of area.* (a co-location venue manager)[1]

As a consequence of high demand and low supply, median housing prices in Marrickville have almost tripled in the last 9 years)[2]. This means that the pressure to increase housing supply is high and many redevelopments have already taken place, replacing industrial precincts with medium-density apartment blocks. Moreover, while the Inner West boasts one of the highest percentages of graduates in the state and a higher average income (ABS, 2018), artists living and working in the area belong to lower income brackets and, therefore, may be the first to be priced out.

Our informants also suggest that the first wave of artists moving to the Inner West is now being followed by more prosperous creative workers, including designers and architects, who are moving into the new commercial "creative spaces" offered by developers at higher rental prices than could be charged originally for the warehouses. Even well-maintained industrial buildings are being repurposed, as more profitable, space-efficient and clean creative work displaces creative endeavours that are less commercial and sometimes noisy and untidy:

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1. Some informants indicated to the researchers that they preferred to remain anonymous when being quoted on some matters.

2. https://www.realestate.com.au/invest/house-in-marrickville,+nsw+2204

there's all this [...] recent advertising of the warehouses in Marrickville [as] "creative spaces". Real estate agents [...] love saying that and they're really trying to bring it in, but [...] what they have in their head is architects and twenty-eight-year-olds sitting behind computers with lovely drawings behind them [...] and drinking coffee and all the rest of it, and it's really frustrating because [our work] is dirty. Really what goes on, what we do is kind of doing hard work, moving stuff, making stuff – it's about making, fabricating and they don't get it. (Camilla – Mess with It)

The example of the Mungo Scott Flour Mill in Summer Hill, as James from Brand X explained, is particularly telling, with an artist community replaced by a more affluent cohort of creative economy workers.

TREND 2. EMERGENCE OF HYBRID ENTERPRISES AS A MEANS OF ACCOMMODATING THE COMMERCIALISATION OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SPACE

Our City of Sydney report (Ang *et al*., 2018) identified the commercialisation of cultural production and space as one of the key trends, and noted that this was a strategy to adapt to growing city rental and living costs. Yet, while some art and cultural practitioners are able to become more entrepreneurial and engaged with niche markets in the "creative economy", many creatives fail to find a suitable entry point into it (Stevenson *et al*., 2017). As a consequence, many artists are compelled to maintain other jobs, leaving their creative endeavours to their spare time, and venues that were once non-commercial, from art galleries to co-working facilities, are being transformed into income-generating operations.

Whilst these interrelated trends were confirmed by our research in the Inner West, another form of adaptation to the

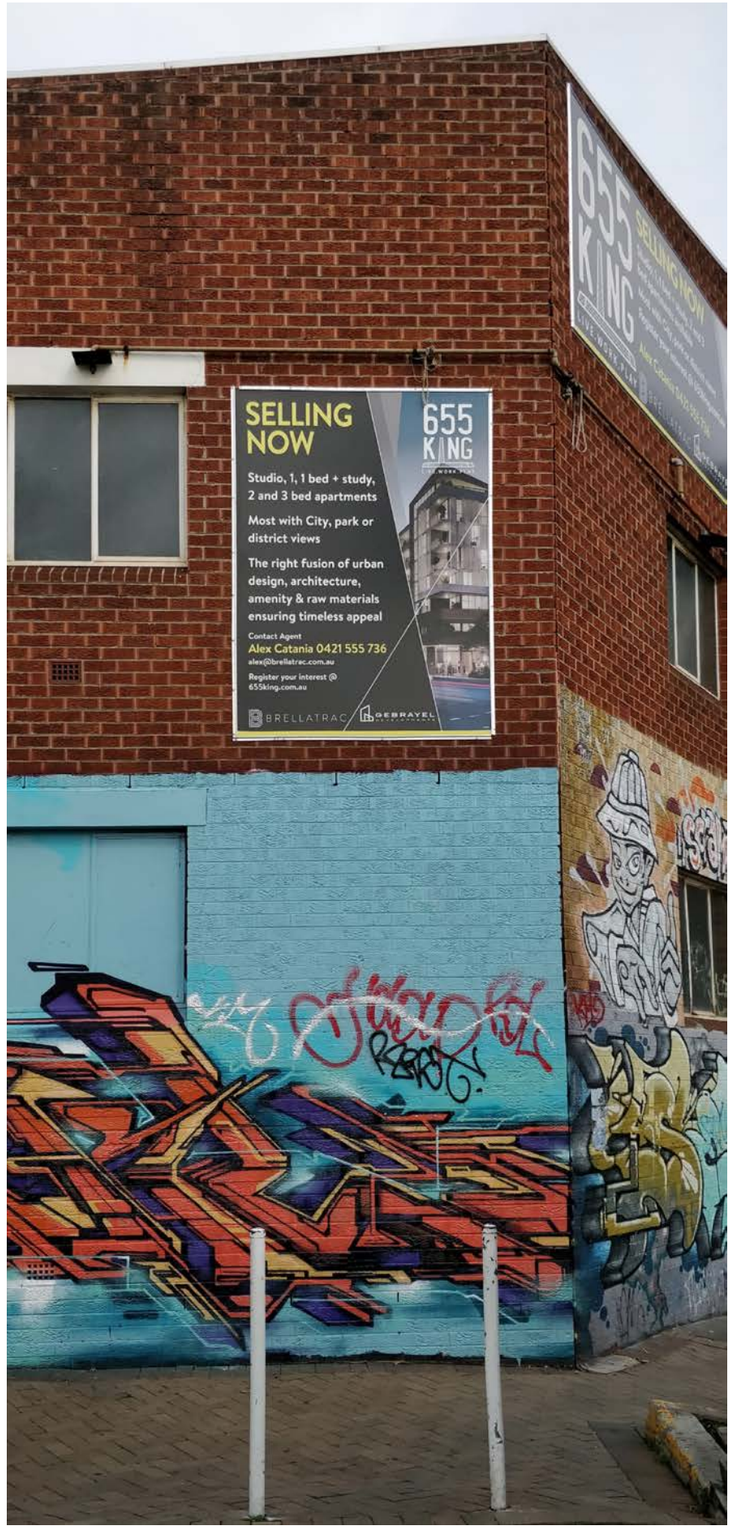


Image 4. *Several of the industrial buildings in the St Peters triangle have either been demolished or earmarked for being redeveloped into apartments.*

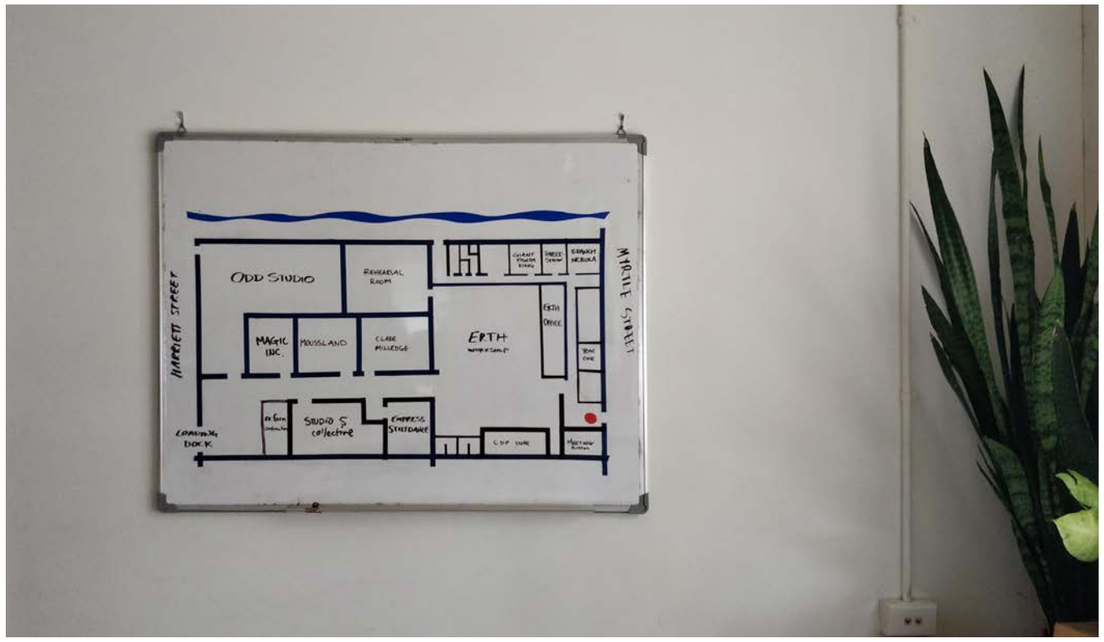


Image 5. *Since moving into the Marrickville warehouse, Erth has shifted from being a theatre company to also managing the co-location of the various creative organisations that sublet the same building.*

commercialisation of cultural production and its spaces also featured in the case studies. Specific organisational choices allowed creative operators to house both income-generating and non-commercial activities within the same venue.

Adopting hybrid entrepreneurial models, even within the legal framework a private company, allows many organisations to maintain their role in subsidising and supporting their creative networks. Some purposefully combine a for-profit structure — for example, in the management of co-working facilities — with shared ownership operations, such as artist-run associations. Others are registered as charities or incorporated associations, but maintain entrepreneurial operations that allow them to operate their venues. This arrangement includes offering space for corporate events, running educational programs, selling crafts, or simply sub-letting parts of existing venues to private tenants.

Even organisations that are fully commercial, as in the case of Art Est. or SquarePeg Studios, sustain community-oriented activities — from exhibitions to residencies to mentorship programs — that are intended to benefit their creative communities. It is evident that these hybrid enterprises are dependent on the availability of suitable space, and that each business case is tailored to the particular spatial features of each venue.

TREND 3. SHIFT FROM CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS TO CREATIVE VENUE MANAGERS

Several of the organisations interviewed (Nauti, Erth, Brand X, Tortuga, Art Est., LOTW, Mess with It) started life as businesses or initiatives focussed solely on their own creative work. Because of the lack of suitable and affordable space, they were all forced to become space managers and to sublet parts of their venues. As Sharon from Erth noted:

We were kind of stuck. We could take on a big space and get other people or we could take a small space and try and find the money or share the smaller space with other people as well. (Sharon – Erth).

Like Erth, some organisations are either managing larger spaces than they actually need, or squeezing their operations into smaller spaces in order to have available space to rent out. Some, as detailed in the case studies, have become professional space managers (Brand X, Nauti Studios), but many others are struggling to juggle their core business and their new role as space managers:

on having to come here, we had to take on a whole lot of other responsibilities that we hadn't had to think about, so things like security, telephone lines, internet, cleaning, you know, just general building maintenance. [...] So all of that, it takes an inordinate amount of time and it's boring [...] that has been an unexpected drag, really, not only on resources, also on your headspace. So you're not just thinking about

> *running a theatre company, you're thinking about running a building!* (a co-location venue manager)

Even when sub-tenanting is a deliberate choice, it adds a further layer of difficulty to the day-to-day operations of small creative organisations. However, as James from Brand X explains, there is an upside to having spaces that are run by current or former artists, as they understand better the needs of their tenants, and are capable of fostering the right kinds of network within venues:

> *you can give [artists] space but that's actually a liability. You've got to create an environment that attracts innovation and you've got to facilitate programs, residencies, professional development and then you've also got to equip it with the right infrastructure. So, yeah, "artists by artists" is [the] key thing.* (James – Brand X)

This view is shared by many other venue operators, who see added value in having creatives involved in the management of their shared workspace.

TREND 4. CO-LOCATION AND SHARED INFRASTRUCTURE

Related to Trend 3 is another involving co-location of different creative entities and individuals within the same venue. A consequence of unaffordable space, this arrangement makes possible realising economies of scale by sharing expensive equipment and ancillary spaces, from meeting rooms to kitchenettes to lavatories. As highlighted in the 2018 report (Ang *et al*., 2018), co-working is also an effect of the casualisation of the creative workforce (Morgan and Nelligan, 2018), with many traditional arts companies, such as theatre, dance and performing arts, having lost core funding support and, therefore, becoming reliant on *ad-hoc* performers. Similarly, the film and television industry increasingly relies on the casual employment of copywriters, writers, set builders, prop makers and costumists, leaving those working in these professions in need of space for their own equipment and desk space. Such creatives have adopted flexible work arrangements similar to other freelancers, yet with spatial needs that are rather different, given the necessity of room for storage and light-industrial craftwork. It is for this reason that former industrial sites are particularly suited to this kind of co-working. As Hellen from Tortuga Studios put it:

> *I'm intrigued by the sense of memory within a space and that feeling of a past life; I'm not interested in white boxes. At Tortuga, where there is significant cultural production that requires heavy machinery, high clearance, truck access and industrial zoning, the space is integral to our existence.* (Hellen – Tortuga Studios)

Kim from SquarePeg also commented that moving to a non-industrial venue, for an organisation involved in light-industrial crafts such as jewellery making, would have added excessive maintenance costs:

> *Brenda just literally went out, looking at warehouse spaces or large – all sorts of spaces. She looked at [...] first-floor flats that might have been [suitable] – but it need[ed] to be something not too precious[...]. It is messy, so you can't really go into a pristine – or you might go into a pristine sort of workspace but you'd have to pay too much to have that space and take care of it.* (Kim — SquarePeg Studios)

Co-locating and working in the same venue means that expensive equipment can be shared, a response to the difficulty for single artists and freelancers to install or own costly infrastructure in their homes or temporary studios. For this reason, organisations like SquarePeg Studios, CRFM, LOTW, and MIT do not only offer shared space, they also provide access to specific infrastructure, including machinery and rehearsal facilities, for tenants and other users.

Co-working is also the basis for potential communal economies. Jennifer from Art Est. explained that these relationships are often serendipitous, and are inseparable from the venues themselves:

> *We kind of look out for each other. You know, there's a styling company, they popped in. They said "We need to do a photo shoot. Can we use your beautiful white walls and photograph some of our objects?" Absolutely. The boys that have got the business where they do the cabinetmaking and kitchens and everything, if I need wood for anything or something cut, they look out. And some of the people here, they send their kids to our classes. So there's that kind of informal friendship and arrangement that we have.* (Jennifer — Art Est.)

Co-location also offers opportunities for collaboration and creative crossovers, even when the same venue is used by creative organisations working in different fields:

> *Everyone here is pretty well established as their own independent company, so it's just if a happy accident happens where we can combine our forces for good, then we do. [However], there was a company here that couldn't cope with the extremes of temperature because in winter it's very cold and in summer it's quite hot, and they had to leave. And one of the things that they said they used to notice was the feeling of community and shared ideas, that they felt that prior to that they'd felt quite isolated and alone, and so they really enjoyed that feeling here*. (a co-location venue manager)

> *I find just like diversity in life should also be in a workspace and I find that inspiring. Like when I was at uni, studying art and I was just around a bunch of people doing the same thing, I didn't find that as inspiring as when I was a part of a space and there was a sculptor.* (a co-location venue manager)

For venue managers like James (Brand X) and Natalie (Nauti Studios), these creative collaborations are at the core of their space management models. For LOTW, running a venue like the Red Box is a way of leveraging co-location to support the broader creative field in which they operate (physical theatre) and to establish forms of mentorship and incubation that allow younger performers and emerging companies to find a voice in the early stages of their careers. Camilla from MIT notes a similar trend, as established artists have begun to share studios with those who are starting out.

These cooperative relationships are intrinsically linked to the venues themselves, as well as to the neighbourhoods where they are located. As a result, for some re-locating becomes very hard, as Hellen from Tortuga Studios notes:

> *[Being in an industrial park] is not going to work. We know this because it's been tried by other groups – it doesn't work and people and spaces fragment. There is a sense of community that's inherent with a place like Tortuga – it is a collaborative space where we bounce off our neighbours, we bounce off the locals; that's part of who we are and what we do.* (Hellen — Tortuga Studios)

However, there are financial and temporal hindrances to realising the full potential of co-location, given that many organisations and artists work in what one of our interviewees describes as "survival mode":

> *I would like to [register] as an ARI, I would like to formalise it more and I would like to put it more out there that we are a group, and actually provides like real support for the people who are here, and have more of a presence and be more kind of collectively active in what we could be doing in our actual capacity. And that just hasn't happened because it's just everybody's just really trying to survive. So we're sort of very much in survival mode rather than trying to collectively [...] expand and create something.* (a co-location venue manager)

TREND 5. MAINTENANCE OF CREATIVE NETWORKS BEYOND PERMANENT USERS

As a combined result of the gentrification of the Inner West (Trend 1), which has already pushed out many creative workers, and of the emergence of co-location (Trend 4), some venues covered by this research have become nodes of creativity that extend far beyond single users and tenants. These remaining warehouses function as hubs for displaced artists to maintain their relationships with the Inner West – both with its creative networks and supply chains. For example, Tortuga Studios is located in an area of St Peters (the so called "creative triangle") which has seen the disappearance of many of its creative venues in the last few years. A remaining "nexus" of cultural interchange, Tortuga hosts much more than its tenants. As Hellen explained, it is an anchor point for those who left, enabling them to secure their relationship to the area and to their former supply chains and friends.

> *There were hundreds of people in countless creative spaces around here eight years ago: now, we're pretty much the last man standing. It's soul destroying, and it inherently changes our community. We are not going to stop doing what we do, and the creative mob that have been forced to leave this area still work and interact with us on a regular basis. Tortuga has become a nexus between artistic production and the community that is required to do this on a large scale.*

> *We do an annual light-based art exhibition with live bands, music and performers and we put it all on for free in the back streets behind the warehouse called In the Night Garden as part of the Sydney Fringe Festival. [...] This year, people were in tears, thanking us for "bringing the community together" and telling us it is "just what St Peters needs". I didn't have the heart to tell them that I'm not going to do it again because this little pocket has been sunk in a paved mire of apartment blocks and underground car parks – the old spaces have been razed, the artists have been forced out – what is the point? Tortuga will continue to do what it does, proudly, but the larger-scale art celebrations cannot exist without the spaces and the people that make them sing.* (Hellen — Tortuga Studios)

This is also the case for other venues located in areas experiencing less radical changes. These venues offer employment, recreational, rehearsal and exhibition opportunities for communities connected to, but extending beyond, the venue tenants themselves:

> *[In] cities, we need spaces like this, not just what Art Est. offers but what the whole complex offers within this local area; you know, it's employment for people [...] I'm sure half the people that work here live locally as well, and their businesses wouldn't be sustainable if they had to have their warehouses [...] an hour's drive from where they live and where their clients are.* (Jennifer — Art Est.)

> *I think we all totally get that there are business interests involved, but at the same time it's like I don't know what this area would look like without Airspace. It would just be what, a whole block of apartments? I don't know that that's necessarily the best thing for the community. I think you lose a lot of that vibrancy, a lot of that really important community work in terms of being a hub where people know where to come and they have a safe place where it's welcome, and I just think*

it's a balancing act and I think we're at the mercy of hoping that Council and government do actually value places like ours. (Paula — Airspace Projects)

Issues and Challenges

ISSUE 1. UNAFFORDABILITY AND INSECURITY OF TENURE OF CREATIVE SPACES IN THE INNER WEST

The affordability of suitable space emerged as one of the major concerns of our interviewees, with all mentioning rent increases and the lack of affordable industrial spaces as a threat to their continued creative practice. As was discovered in earlier research (Ang *et al*., 2018), this issue is compounded by the fact that artists usually earn lower incomes than other creative workers, with about 60 per cent of them making less than $10,000 per year from their creative work (Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017). Moreover, as exemplified by LOTW, many smaller creative organisations have lost their core funding as a consequence of the overhaul in the federal funding system, and so cannot afford current market rents, especially if they have large storage needs.

ISSUE 2. DISAPPEARANCE OF INDUSTRIAL BUILDING STOCK

As explained by several of the informants to this research study, co-locating creative enterprises means that venues need to be able to support mixed uses, including light-industrial activities. These requirements explain why all the venues analysed in this report are located in former industrial buildings, where high ceilings, good natural lighting and sturdy finishes allow a wide range of uses.

However, as has been made clear, many industrial warehouses are now being replaced by residential apartment blocks or converted into office space. Large-scale urban infrastructure projects such as WestConnex, the Sydney Metro, and the eventual refurbishment of Parramatta Road have allowed property owners to be granted rezonings and redevelopment opportunities with relative ease. Even when rezoning proposals have been explicitly rejected by the Inner West Council, some of our interviewees fear that escalating decisions to the Joint Planning Panels will mean that even more warehouses are destined to disappear in the coming years. This loss will have a devastating effect on many cultural creation and production enterprises in the Inner West. As John put it:

> *It's not about the money, it's about if we haven't got these guys down there making shoes and frocks and scenery and having trucks full of lights and cameras, who's going to make the stuff we watch on television and the movies we see?* (John — CRFC)

According to another informant, the Inner West is crucial to the creative supply chain supporting the cultural capacities of the inner city, where most of the major exhibitions and performances are held, but where space for their preparation (rehearsals, set creation, etc.) is in short supply. In this regard, bespoke production capacity — generally provided by local artists and artisans — needs to be retained in relative proximity to the centre of the city:

> *I think the Inner West [Council] has a responsibility to ensure that those light industrial and industrial spaces stay, because they're going to go, and if they go then we don't have any kind of core production space close to the CBD… [Sydney] is an international city, so it should [have] and [luckily] there are provisions for those stages and those presentation spaces to be more democratic. So that's exciting, but where then do people make the work, that's the critical thing?!* (a creative director and venue manager)

Recent strategic planning documents, such as the Greater Sydney Commission's *A Metropolis of Three Cities* (2018), envisage a protocol for the management and retention of industrial and urban service lands, including for "mixed light industry, new economy or creative uses". This blueprint, as the research in this report demonstrates, is highly relevant to the Inner West.

ISSUE 3. REZONING FORMER INDUSTRIAL PRECINCTS AS MIXED-USE WITHOUT MAKING PROVISION FOR EXISTING CREATIVE VENUES

A direct result of gentrification in the Inner West, and the consequent disappearance of industrial stock, is the increasing demographic pressure weighing on the remaining industrial precincts:

> *And I've watched a lot of buildings on the road already become medium-density apartments, so that's kind of terrifying.* (a director of a creative organisation)

Our informants are not necessarily opposed to mixed-use sites, and often already operate in precincts where neighbouring warehouses have become lofts, or have been demolished and replaced by apartments. Having more residents, many feel, adds "colour" to areas that would otherwise only be used during the day. However, the way in which the mixing of urban functions is taking place, they generally believe, has had a damaging effect on existing cultural production venues:

> *14 storeys of apartments across the road from [existing] venues? That's crazy, particularly if it pushes back on the spaces that are compliant — and we made sure we were compliant at day one in a very personal way with blood, sweat and tears. It's making us, then, potentially go back and do further attenuation or further adjustments to our venue that's already legal just to accommodate potential noise complaints […] from people across the road in their apartment blocks. (a director of a creative organisation)*

There is little protection for creative venues facing complaints from new residents, even if they have been operating for decades:

> *there is that premise that, as a resident, you have more right[s], and that's wrong, particularly in terms of what Council are trying to do, which is encourage this sort of creative capital.* (a co-location venue manager)

This problem was also recently recognised by the NSW Legislative Council's report, *The Music and Arts Economy in New South Wales*. Specifically, the lack of flexibility of current legislative arrangements regarding noise regulations was highlighted by key stakeholders as a major cause of the disappearance of live music venues in Sydney, and as a problem for rehearsal and studio spaces (NSW Legislative Council, 2018).



Image 6. *Undergoing demolition of the warehouses surrounding Tortuga Studios, in St Peters.*

The current boom in construction of new apartment blocks throughout the Inner West adds a further layer of conflict between creative venues, residents, construction companies and workers:

> *We can't even get our trailers and we can't get a semi in here because of the traffic snarl. It only takes one car to be parked out the back and we're hamstrung for the entire day and we call Council and they come along and they book us instead. […] There's no provision for [our loading and unloading]. So there's provision for the contractors who are working on these [construction] sites: they get to park their vehicles everywhere but we get "Nah". And when they park their vehicles everywhere we can't even access our building. No matter how many times you call up…* (a co-location venue manager)

ISSUE 4. UNSUITABILITY OF NEW "CREATIVE SPACES" WITHIN MAJOR REDEVELOPMENTS

One of the major concerns of our informants, emerging from the gradual replacement of warehouse spaces by apartment complexes, is that provisions for the maintenance of creative spaces within new redevelopments do not satisfy the actual spatial needs of cultural creators and producers. In particular, they feel that new spaces advertised as "creative" are not suited to light-industrial craft and artwork, or lack the kind of flexibility afforded by co-location.

This discrepancy between the features of new, purportedly creative spaces and the needs of cultural producers, according to one informant, has a ripple effect regarding public perception. When these spaces are incorporated into new developments, they often remain empty:

> *You spend a lot of time encouraging and convincing land owners,*

> *property developers, local government that this is needed and then you open with a big "Baaah" and it's empty because no one wants to touch you until it's cool.* (James — Brand X)

In other cases, because artists do not find the new spaces created for them as fit for purpose, the venues remain under-utilised for long periods. The outcome is a misconception about the actual need for creative venues, in spite of the advocacy effort in convincing developers and councils to include creative spaces in new buildings.

Some participants also mentioned the Rich Street redevelopment as a case where the spatial needs of creative workers were not listened to:

> *there's no room there for local cultural production, there's no room there for fabrication, there's no room there for crafts, and the moment you started it, then there would be complaints to have you closed down, probably by the people that are going to be put upstairs. […] So it's not manufacturing or production, that's a little white box for people to put their equipment in, and that is not what we do, and suggesting that it might be an alternative is insulting […]. There's an awful lot of us here who are really, really angry about it.* (a co-location venue manager)

As one informant put it: "*"new creative spaces" is a misnomer*". Such new spaces may be suitable for officework-oriented "creatives" such as architects, designers or game developers, but are inadequate for the messy or noisy work of art and craftwork-oriented cultural producers.

ISSUE 5. NEGLECT OF EXISTING CREATIVE NETWORKS WHEN ASSESSING REZONING AND REDEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS

Related to Issue 4, many of our informants voiced concern that the creative networks nurtured by their venues are not recognised when new development applications are assessed, or when the consequences of urban transformation on neighbouring operations are assessed. Because many of these venues operate as nodes of wider networks (see Trend 5), they possess the social and creative capital that is not captured by current assessment tools. Many of the venues included in this research experienced the consequences of this problem of non-recognition and inappropriate methodology. As explained by Jennifer from Art Est.:

> *It's creative and cultural but it's also employment lands. Because it's mixed use, it's fully occupied, there's not empty spaces here. It's a very vibrant site, it's mixed business, there's a lot of people come and go and use the facilities here. The initial proposals by the landlords grossly underestimated how many people work on site, nor do they include how many customers people have that engage with the businesses on site. They said I have two employees, which for all intents and purposes means that should we close down and be relocated from here, then only two people would be displaced by that. They fail to consider I have about 65 artists work for me at various times throughout the year, not to mention the thousands of students that come throughout the year, and those numbers will just – you know, they weren't on the standard forms that they had to complete "So we're just going to ignore them".* (Jennifer — Art Est.)

ISSUE 6. INFLEXIBILITY IN REGULATION FOR CREATIVE LAND USE

An issue emerging across many organisations operating across otherwise very different creative fields was their shared concern that the increased need for co-location of creative uses is not captured by current zoning and other land-use regulatory frameworks. This lack of flexibility can reduce the capacity for creativity and innovation:

> *We don't fit into their boxes very well. Because we don't comply with one or the other [category] entirely, it's hard for them to recognise who we are and what we do, which is weird. We don't fit into the boxes properly and, frankly, even as a grant writer, I got to the point where I just had enough of trying and trying and trying, and getting nowhere. (*a co-location venue manager)

> *Always my default is the way in which you can ensure these environments thrive and survive is to always just be an enabler. As soon as it becomes too prescribed, it's over, number one because it's always in flux, it's always moving and changing, and for it to be relevant it needs to have that space, unformed space, around it of support. So that's, I guess, where it gets really complicated for most, definitely state government, where it's kind of like you need to box it up and you can't box it up. As soon as you box it up, you've probably only got a year and a half life on the shelf before it becomes irrelevant because no one's working in that space anymore.* (a creative director and venue manager).

Moreover, the absence of specific zoning that allows multiple creative uses makes it very difficult to operate within venue regulation parameters. This is a particular problem with regard to hosting audiences, which is often an integral element of sustaining a creative undertaking:

> *We're trying to do our best to comply with everything but you never know, try and make sure people have RSAs when they're serving alcohol or whatever, you know, all those things that come with having a space. You know, I'm thinking we're going to have big numbers for our opening this Saturday and I'm like "Oh, my goodness, are we compliant in terms of how many people are going to turn up to this thing?" So there are little things like that where we're kind of quite left on our own with that, and we don't know.* (a creative director)

> *I think it's just that thing where there's not a zoning that exists holistically to say, "This kind of work exists". It goes from one point to another and it all is within the same activity.* (a co-location venue manager)

This issue was recently reported by the City of Sydney to the State Legislative Council:

> matters are further complicated by the fact that many creatives are adopting mixed business models, such as hosting workshops or monthly exhibits in an artist's studio, which can be extremely difficult to reconcile with existing building and planning frameworks. (NSW Legislative Council, 2018, p. 101)

Some of our informants used the same example of the Rich Street redevelopment (a consequence of the rezoning of Victoria Road) to explain the lack of flexibility in dealing with illegal mixed uses:

> *That place is brimming with activity. It's choc-a-bloc full of industry and work. It doesn't look pretty, there isn't a little bar on every corner but the moment you make it pretty, and put a bar on every corner, then all those artists have to go, they can't stay; their rents go through the roof. "How do we make it a really good creative hub?" No, it already is. Stop messing with it. Maybe try and protect the people who are there". And the attitude is, "Well, they're doing it illegally". So help them. Don't demonise them, help them.* (a co-location venue manager)

ISSUE 7. PRECARITY AND FINANCIAL RISK OF VENUE CHANGE/RELOCATION

Becoming venue managers of a creative space, as discussed in Trend 3 and 4, is often a necessity. In order to afford their own space, creative organisations need to subdivide their venues, or have chosen to relocate to larger venues than they actually need, so as to share the costs using economies of scale.

Many organisations had to invest money and time in renovating, refurbishing, sound-proofing or otherwise developing their spaces so that they could sublet or co-locate with other enterprises. This was usually a big financial investment for budget-tight creative businesses or incorporated associations. Investments in building improvements of this sort are also imperilled by threats of redevelopment. Further, if such venues are in danger of being redeveloped, the very existence of creative enterprises is at risk, as any available contingent funds have been used to make venues suitable for co-location, and there is no financial buffer available.

ISSUE 8. LACK OF TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CREATIVE VENUE MANAGERS AND RECOGNITION OF THEIR ROLE AS SMALL COMMERCIAL OPERATORS

Despite the efforts of the Inner West Council to support creative venues operators, some of our interviewees believe that these programs have, so far, been insufficient for their needs:

> *I applaud [the Council's] efforts and I know that there's serious intent, but it's got to be followed through. It can't be just research and reports; O.K, let's move forward.* (a director and manager of a co-location venue)

While all recognise the will of the Council in supporting creative practice in the Inner West, they also favour more targeted support in this more complex "multi-task" environment, including management training, for the specific issues emerging from co-location:

> *There needs to be assistance on the ground from councils or state operatives for artists and creatives who want to take on these spaces — help with DAs, fire safety for the buildings, and dealing with the ongoing friction between creatives and residents.* (a creative director)

> *Currently, we take on all this responsibility — it's prohibitively expensive and time-consuming, particularly considering that wages in the industry mean that it is often cost-inefficient. And that's why people do it under the radar: they can't afford to do it and they can't afford the help to get them through. Without the legal framework and "validity" in the eyes of regulators, these places have fragile tenure and are too often exploited and then replaced, lost to history.* (a co-location venue manager)

> *Some of those things, obviously, which are quite crucial are in place, but there are others like the whole DA thing, like licences for this or that, compliance with a whole range of things that kind of — we don't have a Council contact, for example. We don't have one person that we can ring and say "Who do we talk to?"* (a creative director)

Moreover, some informants feel that they often miss opportunities for Council assistance because they have had to adopt a more commercial business model to survive:

> *[The Council's] charter is to work with not-for-profit community organisations and disadvantaged groups, and providing opportunities like that, I guess. So they have different funding models for what they do and to put on festivals and all of that, so as a private enterprise it's difficult for me to harness that. They do promotion: they have online newsletters and things like that. They work with us — they are grateful for the fact that I'm here, there's no doubt about it, they really value what artists contribute to the community, there's no hesitation there, but their priorities, their funding, their KPIs, I guess, and*

strategic plans don't involve us so much. (a director of a for-profit creative company)

ISSUE 9. INEFFECTIVE ALLIANCES AMONG CREATIVE ORGANISATIONS IN THE INNER WEST

One of the most successful Inner West Council initiatives, according to our interviewees, has been the forum organised in September 2018 (four forum discussions were held between 16th and 19th September as part of the research for the *Creative Spaces and Venues Discussion Paper* — Left Bank Co. and JOC consulting, forthcoming, 2019). This was acknowledged as a very important step towards creating a shared sense of belonging, and crucial in building the capacity of the Inner West's creative community. However, many informants, including two quoted here, believe that engaging in such activities is very time-consuming and that participation could be simplified:

It would be great for there to be more [engagement], but I'm also aware that everyone who works in a creative industry is usually fairly time poor, so in terms of having a big old get-together and meeting everyone, it's quite hard to find time. (a co-location venue manager)

[Participating in council-organised events], for any arts business, [is] so important but it does take a huge amount of energy. Like putting the application in and often it's months before the thing happens, [..] so you'll sort of say "We're going to do all these things" and then you get to that point, and then the people that are involved [...] here then might not be exactly the same now, or the circumstances have changed, and so it can be quite [...] a challenge [...]. I think that's probably one of our biggest challenges in terms of interacting with the community and being involved in those community events is just the amount of work that goes into doing it. (a director of a for-profit creative company)

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has highlighted a diverse range of issues facing existing creative spaces in the Inner West LGA. As argued in our previous report — *Planning Cultural Creation and Production in the City of Sydney LGA: A Venue and Infrastructure Needs Analysis* (Ang *et al*., 2018) — such cultural infrastructure requires a careful consideration in urban policy, as its survival is threatened by both urban transformation and the increasing commercialisation of the sector itself. Borrowing from Dempsey & Burton (2012), we described this policy approach as "place keeping": that is, "maintaining and enhancing the qualities and benefits of places through long-term management" (p. 13). Through the following recommendations, arising from the issues raised earlier in the report, we point to some possible ways in which "place keeping" can be achieved in the Inner West, whilst not foreclosing the possibility that active forms of "place making" can also be considered in future policymaking. Both place keeping and place making, we suggest, should take into account the changing nature of work, the income and spatial diversity of the creative and cultural industries, the often-intangible values of artistic creation and production, and the pressures of gentrification.

Recommendations for place keeping

RECOMMENDATION 1 — INCREASE VISIBILITY

We recommend enhancing public awareness of existing creative hubs in the Inner West LGA, particularly the clusters of creation and production: the Sydenham precinct, on private industrial land; and the Canal Road/GreenWay cluster, on Crown/state land. For these last two areas, **we recommend further intensive mapping in order to produce a more fine-grained understanding of the creative activities and networks that they support.** Enhancing the visibility of these clusters, with further research as well as targeted branding strategies, would serve two purposes. First, it would help justify retention of industrial land for creative production uses to government and the wider public. Second, it would inform more targeted supporting policies, based on a deeper understanding of the formal and informal spatial relations that make these areas work as creative clusters (as was done for the Carrington Road precinct — see Gibson *et al*. 2017).

RECOMMENDATION 2 — SUPPORT CREATIVE VENUE MANAGERS

It is important to **recognise the important role of venue/space managers in enabling the co-location of creative organisations and individual workers**. This process involves identifying and, eventually, training these creative entrepreneurs as well as offering them targeted support. Training may involve business mentoring for managing a co-location venue, how to build professional networks, or help with planning and regulation matters, such as development applications, association registrations, and other forms of licensing. Targeted support may also include streamlining the procedures for accessing financial help and other forms of support, or even creating specific grants for venue/space managers to improve the sustainability of their co-location activities, such as through professional development grants.

RECOMMENDATION 3 — POOL KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

Create further opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing, and for pooling resources available to space managers and venue operators. This approach would **increase the ability of operators of creative venues/spaces to collaborate with the local Council and with each other; enhance possibilities for creative crossovers, collaborations and shared supply chains; and contribute to the visibility of the Inner West's creative clusters**. We recommend that existing

channels are both maintained and extended to include creative individuals and organisations in policy making, and to support networking through fora, Open Studio initiatives, conferences and other forms of participatory consultation.

RECOMMENDATION 4 — CAPTURE VALUE

The intangible economic benefits generated by cultural activity are often not captured in standard economic measures. Even when employment and productivity outputs are measured, as reported above (economyid, 2018), these measures often neglect or undervalue the non-market demand for cultural products and services, the systemic capacities of cultural production networks, and the multiple forms and sources of value that link cultural and economic activities (Throsby, 2001). **Use of supplementary forms of valuation are therefore essential** (see Hutter & Throsby, 2008) **to ensure the full contribution of cultural venues/spaces to the Inner West economy is appreciated —and, by implication, the real cost of losing those spaces is given due consideration**.

Exactly how to value the intangible economic value of cultural activity remains a fraught though widely studied question (Markantonis, Meyer & Schwarze, 2012). In the context of the Inner West, the cultural sector's additional economic contribution could be measured by questions such as: how house prices and rents compare with surrounding regions; how much participants also pay for public transport, or petrol and parking to attend cultural events; and for both residents and visitors, how much, hypothetically, of their annual salary would they be willing to sacrifice in order to be able to retain the area's cultural assets. Like all intangible measures, such methods do not establish definitive estimates of economic contribution. However, it is important that they are taken into account since the intangible benefits of cultural assets tend to be understated — if not entirely ignored — in tangible measures such as employment, subsidies and flows of goods and services. We recommend further research on how to capture such benefits.

RECOMMENDATION 5 — CONSIDER CREATIVE SPACES AS A PUBLIC GOOD

Acknowledging the irreducibility of artistic production and creation to its economic outputs means **considering cultural infrastructure, specifically spaces of creation and production, as a public good in its own right**, even when commercial models are adopted to run co-location venues on a sustainable basis. The recommendations of the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value are instructive here, particularly the use of the concept of the cultural ecosystem to emphasise that it is through the interlocking of the social, the economic and the cultural that the greatest value creation can be achieved (Neelands *et al* 2015). Therefore, although 'flow-on' externalities of the creative and cultural sector are important and require to be captured (as per Recommendation 4), cultural activities ought to be supported as legitimate ends in themselves and as intimately connected to rights of cultural citizenship (Andrew *et al*, 2005). Following leading examples from other international cities, and in acknowledgement of the public value of cultural infrastructure, cultural facilities can be embedded and existing clusters preserved in major redevelopments (see World Cities Culture Forum, 2017).

RECOMMENDATION 6 — SECURE AFFORDABILITY

The main recommendation stemming from acknowledging both private and public cultural infrastructure as a public good is the need to **preserve the affordability of existing creative spaces in the Inner West**, even when eventual alternative land uses (eg., commercial or residential) may generate better short-term impacts on standard measures such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP). An example of such an approach is the 'lease to own' model that was adopted by the municipality of San Francisco to help arts organisations find affordable property (World Cities Culture Forum, 2017). In that case, a not-for-profit development corporation was created to address the lack of affordable housing and studio space for artists San Francisco. The Inner West Council could explore this and other models through which it could support rent-to-own arrangements (see also Recommendation 12).

RECOMMENDATION 7 — ADVOCATE APPROPRIATE ZONING

Advocate for the Department of Planning to modify the standard template to provide opportunities for creative uses within industrial and other zones. Such creative uses would need to **recognise the specificity of space requirements for cultural creation and production, and allow for multi-purpose space use that includes a wider range of activities**, such as entertainment and community activities.

RECOMMENDATION 8 — FACILITATE TRANSITIONS

The trends and issues identified in this and previous research suggest the importance of recognising transitional phases (both from one venue to another, and from being a creative organisation to also managing a creative venue) as crucial for the maintenance of cultural creation and production. Hence, we recommend **creating targeted support for occupants of creative spaces earmarked for redevelopment, in order to facilitate their transition to new venues, co-location arrangements and/or new business models**. This measure would specifically apply to precincts in danger or in the process of disappearing. These include the Victoria Road and Carrington Road areas in Marrickville, the creative triangle in St Peters, and the Parramatta Road area between Stanmore and Ashfield. Recognising the importance of transitional phases, we suggest, would also mean funding additional research to chart what happens to displaced creative individuals and organisations, so as to have a better understanding of the assistance required of Council "on the ground".

Recommendations for place making

RECOMMENDATION 9 — RECOGNISE CREATIVE SECTOR DIVERSITY

Recognising the diversity of the creative sector — in terms of nature of the activity, space needs, scale and income — would be a crucial step towards maintaining creative and cultural production in the Inner West. Market-driven provision of creative spaces and venues disproportionately benefits office-based, higher-income creative industries such as design and architecture. Other cultural producers who are known to have lower average incomes and more precarious work conditions — such as those in the performing and visual arts and crafts — encounter greater barriers to access space, secure tenancies and housing (Morgan & Nelligan, 2018; Throsby & Petetskaya, 2017; Stevenson *et al*., 2017). **Providing space for cultural creation and production must, therefore, not be based on "one-size-fits-all" approaches to policy and support.**

RECOMMENDATION 10 — COMBINE SHORT- AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Many existing programs for subsidised creative spaces, as also argued in our earlier report (Ang *et al*, 2018), are affected by the issue of "short-termism". Offering spaces for limited periods of time could help organisations in transition (see Recommendation 7), and could suit some artists working on specific projects, but are often not sustainable for those who need to make major investments for fit-out and equipment in a space before they can operate. **Viable solutions need to be found to ensure the longer-term availability of affordable and suitable space**. One such solution could involve enlarging the scope of public art policies attached to large-scale redevelopments in support of ongoing space allocations for 'arts in public', where publically accessible space is made available for artistic practitioners instead of one-off public art works.

RECOMMENDATION 11 — ACCOMMODATE LIGHT-INDUSTRIAL CREATIVE SPACES

An important finding of this research has been the mismatch between the spatial needs of messier and noisier forms of cultural and creative production, and the so-called 'creative spaces' offered within existing and new, mixed use developments — often as shopfronts. To address this discrepancy, we suggest that creatives (such as the members of creative organisations, individuals and venue managers featured in this report) be consulted in the design process from its very beginning, so as to provide spaces that are fit for the purposes for which they are intended. Council could also work with the City of Sydney to **identify collaborative design solutions to deliver light-industrial creative spaces and venues within the Eastern City District**, as defined by the Greater Sydney Commission.

RECOMMENDATION 12 — DEVELOP MODEL VOLUNTARY PLANNING AGREEMENTS (VPAs)

To boost the provision of subsidised creative spaces within new developments, we suggest that the council develops, drawing on the insights of this research and eventual participatory consultation, a small number of model voluntary planning agreements (VPAs). These should be produced as **specimen guidelines, so that real-estate developers have an easy-to-use blueprint to guide their choices in adopting VPAs that include targeted, suitable creative spaces**. These model VPAs should consider the diversity of uses, spatial needs, and income brackets highlighted in Recommendation 8, but also take into account existing creative spaces that are either replaced by or close to new real estate developments.

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PHOTO CREDITS

All photographs were taken by the authors on the days of the interviews (see appendix 1) unless otherwise specified here.

Cover photo, p.1 — photo by Andrea Pollio.

Airspace Project photos: courtesy of Airspace Projects. Photos by Ellen Dahl.

Brand X photos: courtesy of Brand X.

Legs On The Wall photos on page 24: courtesy of Legs On The Wall.

Nauti Studios photos: courtesy of Nauti Studios.

Red Rattler photos: courtesy of Red Rattler.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - List of Abbreviations

Abbreviations:

ABS — Australian Bureau of Statistics

APRA — Australian Performing Rights Association

ARC — Australian Research Council

ARI — Artist-Run Initiative

AV — Audio-visual

AWA — Amalgamated Wireless Australasia

BCA — Building Code of Australia

COFA — University of New South Wales College of Art and Design

CRFM — Canal Road Film Centre

LEP — Local Environmental Plan

LGA — Local Government Area

LGBTIQ+ — Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Intersex, Queer and others

LOTW — Legs On The Wall

IWOST — Inner West Open Studios Trail

MIT — Mess with It

MOST — Marrickville Open Studios Trail

NSW — New South Wales

PTY LTD — Private Limited Company

POPE — Occupancy Permit for Places of Public Entertainment

SFX — Special effects

UNSW — University of New South Wales

VPA — Voluntary Planning Agreement

Appendix 2 — Glossary Of Organisation Types

Glossary:

An **Artist-Run Initiative (ARI)** is an incorporated association whose members are artists. A register of NSW ARIs is available online at https://visualarts.net.au/space/artist-run-initiatives-aris/aris-australia/.

An **Incorporated Association** is a legal entity composed of at least five members. As per the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 2009, organisations operating as commercial enterprises are not eligible for incorporation. The Act prohibits an association from providing monetary gains to its members.

A **Pty Ltd (or Proprietary Limited)** is a company with a maximum 50 shareholders, privately held and with shareholders' liability limited to the amount of their shares (as per the Corporation Act 2001).

A **Sole Trader** is a single person owning and operating a business registered with an Australian Business Number (ABN).

Appendix 3 — List of Interviews

CASE STUDIES INTERVIEWS					
N.	**Space categories**	**Organisation name**	**Name of interviewee**	**Date of Interview**	**Place of interview**
1	Art school, studios and gallery	Art Est.	Jennifer McNamara	17 Sept	Leichhardt
2	Multi-purpose TV and cinema production facilities	Canal Road Film Studios	John Weston	18 Sept	Leichhardt
3	Artist-run initiative, co-working space for creative organisations	Tortuga Studios	Hellen Morgan-Harris	26 Sept	St. Peters
4	Jewellery studios	SquarePeg Studios	Kim Elliott, Emily Cobb	5 Oct	Marrickville
5	Art gallery, artists' studios and residence	Airspace Projects	Helen Amanatiadis, Anie Nheu, Paula do Prado	5 Oct	Marrickville
6	Theatre company, shared warehouse for creative organisations	Erth	Sharon Kerr	8 Oct	Marrickville
7	Co-working venue for creative organisations	Nauti Studios	Natalie Cheney	11 Oct	Stanmore
8	Temporary venue management organisation for creative spaces	Brand X	James Winter	15 Oct	Darlinghurst
9	Theatre company and rehearsal venue manager	Legs On The Wall	Cecily Hardy	15 Oct	Lilyfield
10	Co-working venue for creative organisations	Mess With It	Camilla Lawson	18 Oct	Marrickville
11	Performance venue	Red Rattler	Bones Rock, Teresa Avila	25 Oct	Marrickville

APPENDICES

Appendix 4 - Overview of Case Studies

ND: Not disclosed

NA: Not applicable

Name	Art Est.	Canal Road Film Studios	Tortuga Studios	SquarePeg	Airspace Projects	Erth	Nauti Studios	Brand X	Legs On The Wall	Mess With It	The Red Rattler
Artist/ Organisation	Art school, pottery workshop and school, and private gallery	Centre for the support of independent Australian movie and TV production — venue manager	ARI, art gallery, TV production workshop and co-working space	Jewellery studios, jewellery school and pop-up shop	ARI, gallery space, museum and shop	Theatre company and venue manager	Co-working space for creative organisations and individuals	Creative venue manager and activator of unused spaces	Theatre company and venue manager	Co-working space for creative organisations and individuals	Performance and event venue manager for Queer Arts
No. of years in current venue	10 (2008)	23 (1995)	10 (2008)	4 (2014)	4 (2014)	3 (2016)	4 (2014)	6 (2012)	Circa 15 (early 2000)	5 (2013)	10 (2008)
Type of building	2 Warehouse spaces in a larger industrial precinct	Former industrial precinct including several warehouses and purpose-built containers	2 Warehouse spaces	Warehouse	Warehouse	Warehouse	Warehouse	Former Bowling Club	Warehouse and purpose-built rehearsal theatre	Warehouse	Warehouse
Floorspace	ND	3ha	ND	200 sqm	ND	ND	620sqm	ND	ND	530sqm	ND
Co-location and sharing infrastructure (Y/N)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Owner of building	Private	Government Property NSW	Private	Private	Private	Private	Private	Council	Crown/State	Private	Owned by the organisation
Subsidies for venue (Y/N)	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Business Model (profit/ not-for-profit -hybrid)	For profit (private company)	Hybrid	Hybrid (private company and ARI)	For Profit (private company)	NFP (Incorporated Association)	NFp (Incorporated Association)	For Profit	NFP (Incorporated Association)	NFP	Hybrid	NFP
Tenure (length of lease)	ND	Under negotiation	3y + 3y	Under negotiation	1y+1y	3y+3y	ND	1y	ND	3y + 3y	NA
Development/ Demolition clause (Y/N)	Y	NA	Y	Y	ND	Y	ND	ND	ND	N	NA

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Researcher Biographies

Lead consultant

Distinguished Professor Ien Ang

Professor Ang is one of the leaders in cultural studies worldwide, with work focusing on nation and globalisation, migration, multiculturalism and cultural institutions. She has collaborated extensively with partner organisations including the NSW Premier's Department, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Special Broadcasting Service, the Australia Council and the City of Sydney. She has published a number of research reports including, most recently, *Smart Engagement with Asia: Leveraging Language, Research and Culture,* for the Australian Council of Learned Academies*, Securing Australia's Future Program, Promoting diversity of cultural expression in arts in Australia* for the Australia Council for the Arts. She is currently working on a book with Prof Kay Anderson, Dr Andrea Del Bono, Prof Donald McNeill and Dr Alexandra Wong on the transformation of Sydney's Chinatown in the Asian century (to be published by Rowman & Littlefield International and based on ARC-funded research with the City of Sydney).

Lead consultant

Emeritus Professor David Rowe

Emeritus Professor Rowe has published extensively on the transformations in contemporary cultural life, especially in the key areas of cultural citizenship, sport, media, urban leisure, artistic practice and the politics of the public sphere. He is a Fellow of both the Australian Academy of the Humanities and the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, and in 2015 was Western Sydney University Researcher of the Year. He is an Honorary Professor of the University of Bath and a Research Associate of SOAS, University of London. Professor Rowe has been a research consultant to several government departments, local councils, professional organisations and community groups. He has been a Chief Investigator on ten Australian Research Council projects. His latest book is the co-edited Making Culture: Commercialisation, Transnationalism, and the State of 'Nationing' in Contemporary Australia (Routledge, 2018). Professor Rowe's work has been published in many languages, including Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Korean, Spanish and Turkish.

Lead consultant

Professor Deborah Stevenson

Professor Stevenson is a Professor of Sociology and Urban Cultural Research in the Institute for Culture and Society whose research activities and interests are focused in particular on arts and cultural policy, cities and urban life, and place and identity. She has published widely on these topics including the recent books, *The City* (Polity), *Cities of Culture: A Global Perspective* (Routledge) and *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveller* (co-authored, Sage). Her research program has been supported by external funding from a range of sources, and she has been a Chief Investigator on seven successful ARC grants with her two recent projects being 'Recalibrating Culture: Production, Consumption, Policy' and 'Australian Cultural Fields: National and Transnational Dynamics'. Professor Stevenson has worked as an advisor and consultant to all levels of government including most recently as a member of the Ministerial Reference Group for the NSW Arts and Cultural Policy Framework.

Lead Consultant

Dr Liam Magee

Dr Magee researches and publishes in the areas of urban development and digital technology, examining innovative ways software, databases, maps and networks can improve our cities. He has worked in the US, South Africa, Cambodia, Australia and India on urban and technology projects with World Vision, Accenture, Microsoft, FujiXerox and the City of Melbourne. Prior to his PhD, Dr. Magee worked as a software developer, manager and consultant in a number of start-ups and small businesses. Dr Magee is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society currently working on a number of ARC funded research projects, including the one entitled 'Antarctic Cities and the Global Commons'. His latest book, *Interwoven Cities,* was published by Palgrave Macmillan, UK in 2016.

Project manager and Research analyst

Dr Andrea Pollio

Dr Pollio holds a PhD from the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University. Between 2012 and 2013 Andrea collaborated with the European Union project Peripheria, working in a team to design an interactive participatory service for a neighbourhood of Milan. At the Institute of Culture and Society, Andrea has participated as research assistant in a number of ARC-funded grants, and, most recently, was part of the team involved in the *Mapping Culture* report for the City of Sydney.





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