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PRESS RELEASE

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Artists occupy ground floor of new mixed-use development

The UK's first-ever mixed-use project combining affordable housing and affordable artists' studios has opened in East London.

Empty, boarded-up commercial units have become a feature of many new mixed-use schemes in London. Affordable housing developers Swan Housing, realised that Acme Studios could provide the perfect solution to the requirement to provide employment space at their new development at Leven Road in Poplar. Instead of generic retail or light-industrial space, the ground floor was developed to Acme's specifications to create 21 accessible, self-contained artists' studios. Not only are the units 100 per cent occupied from day one, but the number of people in employment on the previously commercial site has increased by 50 per cent.

"Rising rent levels and lack of suitable space means it is increasingly difficult for artists to find genuinely affordable studios in London", explains Acme Co-director Jonathan Harvey. He continues, "Acme works closely with local authorities, commercial developers and housing associations to create innovative development models which benefit all the partners. We are delighted to be involved in this ground-breaking scheme with Swan Housing, who realised artists would be a positive addition to the development as a whole."

Forty per cent of the artists live or previously worked in the surrounding area and provide quiet activity which, over time, will become a significant resource for residents and the wider community.

The links between artists and the community will be further strengthened by Acme's Tower Hamlets Studio Residency for an artist whose work naturally engages with local people and community groups. London sound artist, Jan Hendrickse is the first recipient of the two year award which includes a rent-free studio worth £7,000 and a grant of £10,000 a year.

Notes to editors:

Acme Studios is a London-based charity committed to increasing the number and quality of affordable artists' studios in London. Acme is currently developing new studios in the London Boroughs of Brent, Hackney, Newham and Tower Hamlets. Acme receives revenue funding from Arts Council England and the Leven Road project has been part-funded by Arts Council England's Grants for the arts – capital programme.

Press Information

For further press information and images, please contact: Jack Fortescue on 020 8981 6811 or email jack@acme.org.uk or visit www.acme.org.uk