

## Capital Studios

Capital Studios, the London Artists' Studios Development Programme, took place over the period September 2005 to March 2007, and concluded with the launch of two publications at the Whitechapel Art Gallery by Minister for Culture, David Lammy.

*"Artists are central to social cohesion and help us identify how we can live together and create a future together. If we leave our artists to navigate their way in this property market with its rising rates, we will lose out as a consequence."* **David Lammy, speaking at the launch.**



Minister for Culture David Lammy MP speaking at the Capital Studios publications launch at The Whitechapel Art Gallery, February 2007

The London Artists' Studios Development Programme was conceived early in 2005 when Arts Council England, London asked Acme to coordinate an advocacy programme across London, which would raise awareness of the specific pressures on affordable studio space in London and explore opportunities for growth. The programme was led by Acme on behalf of all London affordable studio providers and coordinated by Val Millington.

The objectives of Capital Studios were to:

- publish and present information on artists' studios within a London context
- extend good practice and dialogue about studio space development with public and private sector partners in London

Key outputs are:

1. Publications which help extend knowledge and understanding of the affordable artists' studio sector in London
2. A programme of advocacy seminars targeted at key public sector, local authority and private sector representatives, including property developers
3. A final report making recommendations for future actions

## Publications

The programme resulted in four publications which are available to download from the Acme Studios website – [www.acme.org.uk](http://www.acme.org.uk):

### ***London Digest - a survey of artists' studio groups and organisations in London, Acme and Capital Studios, March 2006***

The *London Digest* contains key facts about affordable studios in London taken from *A survey of artists' studio groups and organisations in England*, Acme Studios, May 2005. In particular, it draws attention to the number, scale and diversity of studio organisations in London, suggests how many studios are likely to be under threat in the coming five to 10 years, and provides a useful benchmark of affordability.

### ***Commercial workspace provision for visual artists - a comparison with the affordable sector, Michael Cubey, Acme and Capital Studios, Feb 2006***

This research was commissioned from Michael Cubey in November 2005. It examines rent levels and terms and conditions offered by commercial workspace providers in comparison with those offered by affordable studio providers. In doing so the study provides evidence of the significant subsidy that studio providers make to artists and the visual arts economy in general in London.

### ***Artists' studios: creating public benefit, Acme and Capital Studios, December 2006***

Capital Studios commissioned Susan O'Reilly to research and write up two case studies. These take an in-depth look at two studio buildings in London, ACAVA's Blechynden Street building in North Kensington and APT in Lewisham, mapping the activity of each organisation and the studio artists based there and evaluating, as far as possible, the cultural, economic and social benefits the studios organisations deliver, both in their locality and in a wider cultural context.

The publication celebrates the achievements and activities of the two studio buildings and provides evidence in support of the Capital Studios advocacy programme.

## *Artists' studios: a guide to securing, supporting and creating affordable studios in London, Acme and Capital Studios, March 2006*

Written towards the end of the Capital Studios programme, the responses to the various presentations, together with the findings of commissioned research helped refine the contents of this publication. As a result the detailed contents have been written with an acute awareness of the issues that needed to be covered, the key points to be made and the solutions that should be proposed.



Isa Saurez Acme Southwark Studio Residency holder at the Galleria and David Lammy MP

## Advocacy programme

Some twenty local authorities were contacted through the Capital Studios programme, together with several housing associations, the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, the London Development Agency, Creative Lewisham, Create KX and a number of consultancies working in the cultural sector.

Local authorities are at different stages in relation to their understanding of the issues around affordable studio provision, their awareness of need and the economic and social benefits artists bring to specific developments. The relationships between arts/culture officers and senior officers within economic development, regeneration, housing and property services departments also vary from one local authority to another. A focused and individual approach was therefore adopted to maximise the effectiveness of seminars and presentations.

Formal presentations took place with the London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Bromley, Croydon, Havering, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton, Richmond and Sutton and with the London Development Agency.

## Next Steps

The Capital Studios programme represents only a successful 'first phase'. It has begun to raise awareness of the issues facing affordable studio providers among developers in the public and private sector. It has also brought together a body of research and publications which can now be used to support the studio sector not just in London, but nationally.

There is a need to consolidate and build on the work of this first phase and Acme will be continuing to work with Arts Council England, the National Federation of Artists' Studio Providers and other studio organisations to help protect and develop the affordable studio sector in future years.

For further information, or to learn more about Acme Studios and our programme, please contact:

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