

## Artist's plaque celebrates fire station's first 100 years

On Saturday 21 May, Jim Fitzpatrick MP (Limehouse and Poplar) unveiled a specially-commissioned plaque by former Fire Station artist Ben Cove to celebrate the centenary of the formal opening of the building in Gillender Street, Poplar, E14.



[Left to right] Jim Fitzpatrick MP (Poplar and Limehouse), Ben Cove (artist designer of plaque) and Bruce Epsly (Borough Commander Tower Hamlets, LFB). Photo: Acme Studios (2010)

As he unveiled the plaque, former fireman Jim Fitzpatrick MP said: *“As a Fire Station, this building played an important role in the history of Tower Hamlets, throughout the Second World War and beyond. I’m delighted to see its continued use as a unique opportunity for emerging artists. Acme’s work in securing buildings for use as affordable studios not only benefits the artists who use them but also the wider community.”*

Since 1997, the fire station has been home to Acme Studios' Work/Live Programme for artists, one of the UK's most directly supportive artist residency programmes. Following the unveiling, Jim Fitzpatrick joined Bruce Epsly, Borough Commander Tower Hamlets - London Fire Brigade, in a tour of the building where they met artists **Kate Aktin** and **David Osbaldeston**. Speaking at the unveiling, Jonathan Harvey, Chief Executive Acme Studios said:

*"During our time here, we have come to appreciate that this had previously been both a home to the firemen and their families as well as a serious working environment, and indeed this is what it has become again for the artists on our residency programme. We very much hope that our use, in its own way, will also contribute to wider public benefit, so different of course in nature from the building's original purpose, but perhaps no less necessary or valuable. We feel privileged to be the custodians of this building and delighted to celebrate its centenary."*

The plaque on the front of the building is visible from the Blackwall Tunnel and reads:

*The first 100 years  
1911 - 2011  
In celebration of the firemen and firewomen who bravely served  
our community and the artists who now fire our imaginations  
Unveiled by Jim Fitzpatrick MP (Poplar and Limehouse) on 21 May 2011  
Since 1997 the home of Acme Studios' Fire Station Work/Live Programme*

The unveiling preceded a weekend of open studios featuring the 12 Work/Live Residency artists plus three artists in the ground floor studio units. Members of the public had an opportunity to report 'non-emergencies' at **Emma Smith's** unit, play ping-pong with **Gemma Anderson**, see **George Charman's** unit transformed into a camera obscura, watch **Matthew Noel-Tod's** specially created video piece and listen live to **Melanie Clifford's** sound installation which was broadcast live on Resonance 104.4FM. The public were also able to see inside the work/live units of **Briony Anderson**, **Sue Corke**, **Jonathan Baldock** and **Robin Footitt**, and the studios of **Richard Ducker**, **Julie Umerle** and **Andre Wallace**.

#### Notes for editors

Founded by Jonathan Harvey and David Panton in 1972, Acme Studios is a London-based charity that provides artists with affordable studios and living space, residencies and awards. Acme manages over 400 studios in 12 buildings across London. Our expanding Residency, Awards & Community Programme will support over 30 artists this year through the provision of rent-free studios, bursaries, mentoring and professional support. For further information, please contact Jack Fortescue, Communications Officer at:

Acme Studios, 44 Copperfield Road, London E3 4RR  
T 020 8981 6811 F 020 8983 0567 E [jack@acme.org.uk](mailto:jack@acme.org.uk)



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