



Birmingham Production Space



A national centre for the production of art and design, Birmingham Production Space will create a civic asset, bridging manufacturing, creativity and digital to create an unrivalled space of innovation where artists, designers and craftspeople create new work for national and international audiences whilst inspiring future generations in the city and beyond.



Proposal

We propose a **NATIONAL** centre for the production of art and design, based in **BIRMINGHAM**.

Increasingly artists and other creative practitioners are being priced out of London. The travel time between Birmingham and London, which we have to acknowledge as the centre of the UK's artworld, is less than any other major city; living costs are low; we have a significant cultural offer; we have a large HE art and design provision; we have excellent connectivity to the rest of the UK, Europe and beyond; we have a growing creative and cultural sector.

Birmingham Production Space is the missing infrastructure needed to position the city as a serious place to base an ambitious professional practice. An interdisciplinary space where world-class work can be made, where artists meet fabricators, graphic designers cross paths with cultural producers and designer-makers prototype alongside sculptors. By placing workshops and 'space for making in public' at its core Birmingham Production Space offers a completely different kind of workspace, unique to the UK.

The infrastructure to support artists to produce artwork in England is underdeveloped, with a longstanding emphasis on studio space, rather than professional open access workshop and production facilities. This is easily illustrated by a comparison with Scotland where substantial professional facilities for artists, similar to those outlined in this proposal, are well established in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and complemented by provision in Dundee, Aberdeen and other locations across the country. Artists in Glasgow and Edinburgh (which are 45 minutes apart on the train) can access:

Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop – £5.3 million new build underway, phase 1 complete with workshops, residency facilities, presentation spaces, education space and 26 studios.

Edinburgh Printmakers – £6.7 million secured for future renovation of 2000m2 site.

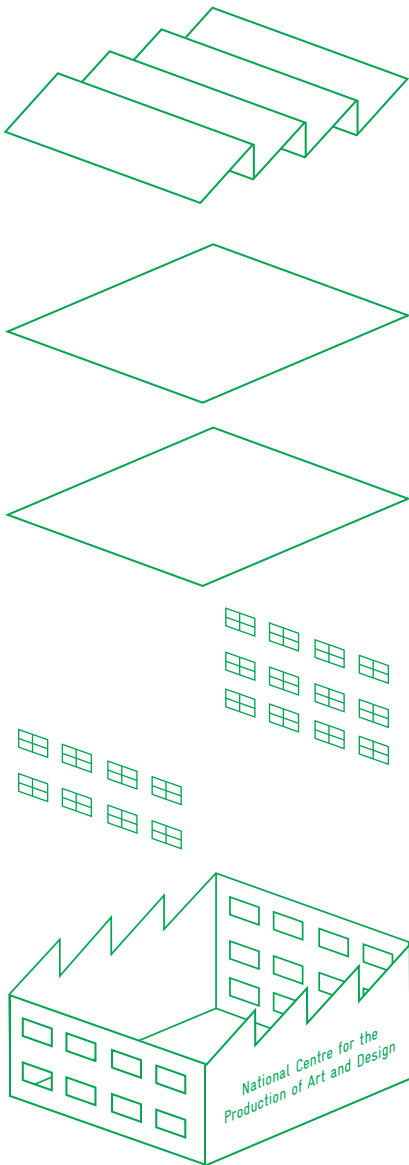
Glasgow Sculpture Studios – recently moved into new premises at the Whisky Bond, provides workshops, 60 studios and presentation space.

Glasgow Print Studio – in creative/cultural industry Trongate development since 2009.

Maklab – 3D design led, digital 'fablab' style space. Started in the council run Lighthouse in Glasgow, now expanding to new sites in the city and franchising operations elsewhere.¹

In England there are print workshops, but there are no equivalent organisations to support the professional production of three-dimensional work. There are (recently established), facilities like the London Sculpture Studio or Blackhorse Workshop in Walthamstow but these are relatively small scale and do not combine workshops with substantial workspace. Spike Island, a large studio complex in Bristol, has small wood, metal and resin workshops, but no technical support or access for non-studio holders.

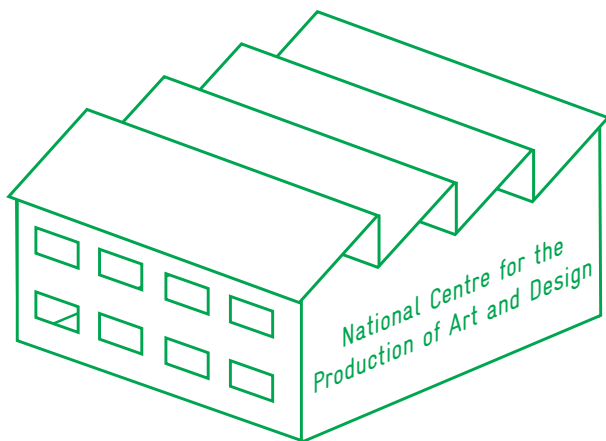
No public space in the UK brings 2D, 3D and digital art and design production together under one roof. This means that, despite the hybridity of contemporary practice, and nature of contemporary art and design education, most artists, designers and makers spend their professional lives working in silos with little opportunity to learn from each other. Where production space does exist it tends to focus on a single media having historically evolved in response to the needs of particular groups of practitioners



1. The provision outlined above is complemented by other providers, in particular WASPs who offer affordable workspace across Scotland, housing 150 artists in Edinburgh and 350 in Glasgow, alongside space for creative and cultural businesses.

Reports like 'Rebalancing our Cultural Capital'² make a strong case for any new national infrastructure for the arts and culture to be based outside London. The report is focused on Arts Council funding, but there must also be a rebalancing of human capital. Core cities like Birmingham need to create the conditions for sustainable creative and cultural ecologies to develop and put in place the support structures that will encourage artists, makers and designers to choose to live, work and establish businesses if meaningful rebalancing is to be achieved.

Birmingham is the second biggest city in the UK yet has no large scale not for profit workspace for artists and no professional production facilities beyond Birmingham Printmakers, a very small member-led print workshop. This proposal is bold, but identifies a sustainable model whose implementation would transform the landscape for creative practice in Birmingham and the West Midlands and, if the ambitious ideas we outline were adopted, England and the UK.



2. <http://www.theroccreport.co.uk/>

Executive Summary

With a unique combination of interdisciplinary making facilities, workspace and technical support Birmingham Production Space will be an exceptional professional environment designed to retain and attract creative talent, support practitioners, build creative businesses and position Birmingham as a place of innovation where world-class creative work is produced.

Birmingham Production Space will be a new civic asset, where thinking through making is made public, where audiences engage at the point of production and creative exploration rather than the point of final presentation. Where artistic practice becomes tangible and design process visible. Where the artists, designers and makers of the future meet and learn from the best artists, designers and makers of today.

Birmingham Production Space will bridge manufacturing, creativity and digital and be a place where professional skills development sits alongside learning opportunities for the public, where research and innovation can occur freely and where multiple points of entry provide access to facilities, ways to engage with creative processes, explore old and new technologies and share skills.

BIRMINGHAM PRODUCTION SPACE WILL:

- Be unique in the UK's arts and culture infrastructure.
- Position Birmingham as the UK's centre for the production of art, craft and design by providing accessible facilities and technical expertise that enable production in a wide range of media including metal, wood, casting, printmaking and 3D digital supplemented by space for education and community engagement.
- Be a sustainable catalyst for regeneration and create employment. The organisation will directly create three full time jobs, six part time jobs and four paid traineeships; will indirectly support at least 110 jobs in the creative businesses housed in the building and a further membership of 150 members.
- Support creative individuals and small businesses by providing professional, affordable workspace for over 100 artists, makers and designers alongside membership options and education, community and residency programmes that will enable wide access to facilities and create much needed infrastructure to support a thriving ecosystem for the creative economy.
- Retain, attract and develop creative talent and cultivate a diverse community of skilled art, craft and design producers by creating a sustainable business model and providing technical support, training and continuous professional development opportunities.
- Empower young people and local communities by using creativity and making to develop skills and unlock potential.
- Stimulate innovation by placing hybridisation, collaboration and cross-innovation at its core.
- Be a community of interest, a visible hub for the creative and cultural industries in Greater Birmingham, home to a critical mass of practitioners, with excellent networks into audiences, markets, industry and communities.
- Work with partners to secure initial capital investment and a substantial physical space – at least 40,000 ft² – on a long-term peppercorn lease. Achieving this will send a clear message that Birmingham supports and values art, culture and innovation and is prepared to unlock resources and make space for them to thrive.

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Working Together

Research shows that workers in cultural and creative occupations earn more and are more productive in areas of high cultural density where ideas cross-fertilize and drive innovation as thinking, tools, processes and people move between arts, culture and the commercial creative industries. In some senses this draws on the *local industrial linkage* model where whole supply chains existed within communities consisting of places to make things (factories/workshops), places to live and places to meet and bring ideas together (churches/pubs/cafes). In *A Manifesto for the Creative Economy*³ the authors outline a series of 'rules' to encourage clustering. These include actively supporting local networks and creating opportunities to bridge the gaps between groups as

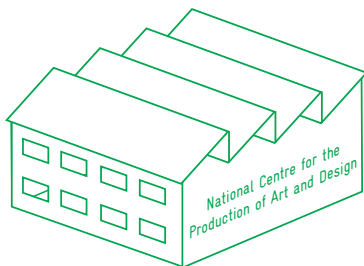
"An unconnected, 'un-self-aware' mass of creative businesses will not benefit from knowledge spillovers or from lower transaction costs."

They advocate policymakers consider people as well as buildings, investing in creative and entrepreneurial skills and the talent that ultimately drives growth in the creative and cultural economy. Birmingham Production Space offers a unique opportunity to invest in both, creating high quality professional facilities for different levels of training and skills development in an interdisciplinary working environment with creative production at its core.

Space for artists, designers and makers is key to this proposal as we believe that the most fertile creative and cultural spaces are interdisciplinary and hybrid, encouraging intellectual curiosity by allowing diverse positions, skillsets and experiences to come together. Therefore we imagine a facility able to simultaneously support, connect and inspire a community of different users in a number of different ways.

3. *A Manifesto for the Creative Economy*, Nesta, 2013.

Location



At this stage we have not identified a particular building. Instead we have identified a series of parameters to inform this proposal. We propose Birmingham Production Space is based in, or close to, **DIGBETH** for the following reasons:

- By making public space for artists, designers and makers in this key re-generation area Birmingham can send out the clear and powerful message that it values and cultivates creativity, innovation and culture.
- Independent visual arts and design activity is already clustering in Digbeth alongside many other businesses within the broader Creative and Cultural Industries – this means an existing local ‘market’ of different types of professional ‘users’ is already established in the area.
- The value of artists as drivers of regeneration is well known, but this valuable community is too often priced out by development. The Curzon HS2 Masterplan outlines a vision for Digbeth as a centre for the Creative and Digital industries, complemented by a rich mix of cultural spaces and creates opportunities to raise funds through mechanisms including the Community Infrastructure Levy in order to secure their position in the area.
- The GSLEP identifies this area as key to its plans in relation to the Creative Industries.
- Though this proposal is focussed primarily on supporting creative and cultural practitioners, education, community space and skills development are also core to the vision. Highgate, Digbeth and St Andrews⁴ suffers from high levels of multiple deprivation and was identified as a priority Neighbourhood in 2008. It is an ethnically and socially diverse area with a higher than average proportion of young people (18–19yrs: 27.8%, 15yrs or under: 20.8%); 65% of households live in social housing; in February 2008 over 26% of people were claiming benefits; there are low educational attainment levels particularly at Early Foundation years, Key Stage 2 and GCSE levels. Access to community space, training and skills development was identified as a priority in the neighbourhood plan.⁵ Birmingham Production Space can support this by working in partnership with existing community groups, schools and social enterprises. Projects like *Black Country Make* in Heath Town, Wolverhampton demonstrate how supported access to making facilities can enable people to create change in their communities and Birmingham Production Space could be a key local resource.
- Digbeth has one of the largest concentrations of social enterprises in the country and has been awarded social enterprise status by Social Enterprise UK.
- The area is a centre for creative and cultural education. Birmingham City University’s art, design and media faculty is located on the Eastside campus, or a short walk across the city centre, and has nearly 6000 students enrolled on 133 courses which fall within the creative and cultural industries. Additionally South Birmingham College, Birmingham Ormston Academy, Birmingham Metropolitan College and Joseph Chamberlain all provide creative learning in this part of the city.
- Digbeth has a rich ‘making’ heritage with many engineering firms and metalworkers still based in the area. This means the existing industrial architecture is well suited with a proliferation of large spaces, built with production in mind; there are natural links into traditional industry, manufacturing and specialist processes; there is future potential with a growing digital sector in the area which offers access to contemporary modes of production; there is broad ranging existing expertise and skill to feed into the ‘local industrial linkage’ model.
- Digbeth offers easy access and proximity to local, regional and national transport links. It is within walking distance of the major city centre bus interchanges, served by Bordesley train station and public consultation is currently taking place on the Midland Metro extension to Eastside. It is within walking distance of New Street and Moor Street train stations and Digbeth Coach station offering national connectivity that will only improve in the future when HS2 is built.

4. Neighbourhoods Board, *Highgate, Digbeth and St Andrews Neighbourhood Profile*. BE Birmingham, 2008

5. *Highgate Digbeth and St Andrews Draft Neighbourhood Plan, 2010-11*. BE Birmingham

Economics

The case has been widely made for the current, and future, economic importance of the creative industries. The arts and cultural industries are critical to innovation within this wider sector and a diverse, culturally rich city attracts business and tourism alike.

- In 2011–12, the number of jobs within the UK's creative economy increased by 8.6% in comparison to 0.7% for the rest of the economy.⁶
- The creative and cultural sector in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP area has a workforce of 55,000 in 6,000 organisations.⁷
- In 2011 the UK's arts and culture industry generated a turnover of £12.4 billion with 24% identified as 'artistic creation'. The GVA contribution for this segment amounted to £5.9 billion.⁸
- In 2010 CEBR estimates the UK's arts and culture industries spent £1.44 billion on manufacturing.⁹
- For every £1 of GVA generated by the arts and culture industry, an additional £1.43 is generated in the wider UK economy through indirect and induced multiplier impacts. In the West Midlands this translates into £337million p/a.¹⁰
- Annually more cultural visits are made to Birmingham than any other UK city outside London, however the West Midlands has the UK's third lowest rate of arts and culture employment at around 3000 FTE's¹¹ compared to around 30,000 in London.
- 48,420 people work in the visual arts in the UK; 89% (43,093) are artists; 4% (1723) work in the West Midlands; 71% have level 4 qualifications¹². The Paying Artists survey recently revealed that 72% of artists earn less than £10,000 a year from their practice.¹³
- There are 23,050 contemporary craft-making businesses in the UK and the estimated total craft related income from the 17,150 businesses based in England is £339million. Practitioners reported an average 'craft-related' income of £19,827 p/a, however over 50% turned over less than £10k. Graphic crafts and textiles are the largest media areas.¹⁴
- Birmingham is the most entrepreneurial region outside of London and labelled as a 'start up hot spot' with 16,281 new companies registered.¹⁵

6. *Building a Creative Nation: Evidence Review*. Creative and Cultural Skills. 2013. P14
7. *Prospectus for Growth*, Creative City Partnership, 2013
8. *The contribution of the arts and culture to the national economy*. Centre for Economics & Business Research (CEBR), 2013. P16
9. *The contribution of the arts and culture to the national economy*. CEBR 2013. P34.
10. *The contribution of the arts and culture to the national economy*. CEBR, 2013. P41 & 52
11. Source: *ONS Business Register and Employment Survey 2008-2010*, CEBR analysis.
12. *Creative and Cultural Industries. Visual Arts Statistics 2012-13*. Creative and Cultural Skills
13. *Paying Artists Report*. a-n magazine, 2014
14. *Craft in an Age of Change*. UK Crafts Councils, 2012
15. <http://www.startupbritain.co/news/2014-01-26/new-figures-reveal-regional-entrepreneurial-hotspot>

Employment



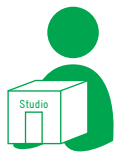
3 Full Time Jobs



6 Part Time Jobs



4 Apprentices



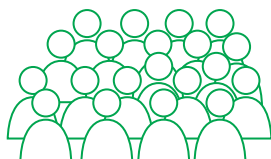
50 Artist Studio Holders



50 Co-Workers



10 Creative Businesses



150 Freelancer Members

We propose an initial core staffing structure that will create three FT jobs; six PT jobs; four paid traineeships (assistants posts) and opportunities for freelancers. The intention would be to increase this team as the organization developed, in particular moving to full time technical support.

CORE TEAM

- Director FT – overall responsibility for the organisation
- Administrator/bookkeeper 0.6 FTE – managing bookings, membership, rentals
- Public Programmer 0.6 FTE – managing education/training programme, community liason.
- Public Programming Assistant 0.8 FTE
- Workshop manager FT – overall responsibility for workshop provision and managing fabrication/prototyping projects; specialist in 3D/digital.
- 3D Technician wood workshop 0.6 FTE
- 3D Technician metal workshop 0.6 FTE
- Workshop Assistant (3D) 0.8 FTE
- Digital technician 0.6 FTE
- Workshop Assistant (digital) 0.8 FTE
- Print technician 0.6 FTE
- Workshop Assistant (print) 0.8 FTE
- Café manager FT

FREELANCERS

- Freelance specialists to run courses and training – drawn from the creative and manufacturing sectors.
- Freelance contractors to work on commercial fabrication/prototyping projects
- Freelance contractors to work on learning projects

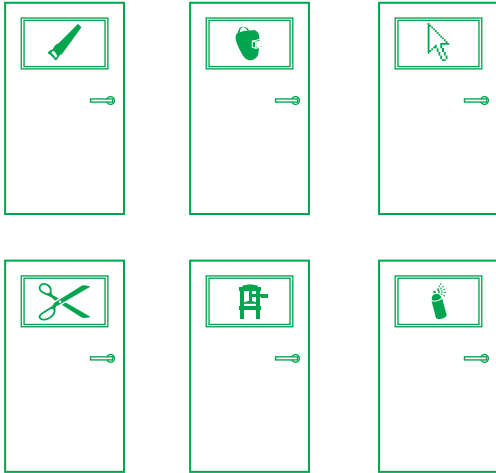
CREATIVE BUSINESSES

- Birmingham Production Space is conceived as a professional working environment for artists, makers and designers. At full capacity the model proposed will create jobs by supporting the careers and businesses of at least 50 studio holders, 50 co-workers and 10 creative businesses alongside the wider workshop membership who will use the facilities, but not be based in the building. Building Blocs, London, estimated that access to their workshop facilities had enabled their users – most of whom are furniture makers, bespoke shopfitters and film/tv prop makers – to generate average annual increase in turnover of £22,000.
- Artists' studios will be allocated through an application process similar to that used at Spike Island which requires studio holders to demonstrate a professional practice and commit to a minimum usage of 52 hours per month and selects not only on the quality of practice but also the contribution artists can make to the organisation.
- Co-working space will also be 'curated' in order to create a fertile, interdisciplinary environment, similar to that at the Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol, which encourages innovation, collaboration and cross fertilisation built on notions of generosity and sharing. Taking a cue from them we propose that the notion of 'professional interruptability' should be written into all leases in order to embed this attitude into the organisation at a fundamental level.
- Workshop membership will allow Birmingham Production Space to support more individuals and businesses beyond the core tenants. Based on case studies we anticipate that membership should easily exceed 150.
- The organisation will act as a hub for the creative and cultural industries and work with partners to offer business support to tenants and members. We will also link with graduate initiatives like BSEEN (Birmingham Skills for Enterprise and Employability Network)¹⁶ and provide a professional setting in which to learn about starting up new businesses.

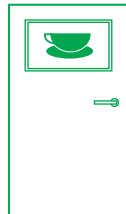
16. <http://www.b-seen.biz/>

Building

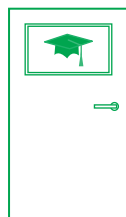
Workshops



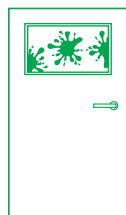
Events Space/Café



Community and Education Space



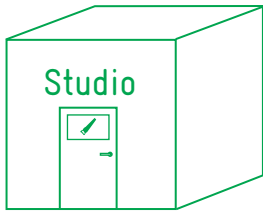
Flexible Making Space



- We have based this initial proposal on 40,000 ft² of space, arriving at this by taking workshop floor plate and staffing costs as a starting point and extrapolating out to identify the minimum size of building needed to create a financially sustainable model. The size of workspaces are based on case studies including the Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop's new build Bill Scott Sculpture Centre, Glasgow Print Workshop, Maklab and Spike Island.
- The building needs to have substantial ground floor space, have good access for loading with goods lifts between floors and be heated. Ideally it will also have some exterior space for storage and working, be industrial in nature and have areas with high ceilings.
- Outline budgets assume a peppercorn rent or asset transfer arrangement is in place with 80% rates relief – the organisation would be not for profit and most likely established as a charity.
- Capital investment on workshop equipment is indicative and based on a model where initial fit out is supplemented in future years as activity generates income allowing users requirements to influence facilities development.
- Capital investment for building fit-out will be needed but as this is building dependent these costs have not been identified – this would need to be part of a further feasibility study.
- We propose that the facilities housed within the building are used, to a certain extent, to create the space around them. On a simple level this might mean that all furniture is produced in house (for example) either through bespoke design, or via open source design projects like *Opendesk*.¹⁷ This approach offers ongoing opportunities for community engagement, skills development and design innovation through the production of the space and building itself.
- An outline business plan has been modelled based on the idea that a long term, peppercorn lease arrangement can be negotiated. In times of austerity this model offers a way for Birmingham City Council to support the project and create a new, sustainable civic asset able to generate enough income to cover its costs. A hugely successful example of this approach is Spike Island in Bristol, which is based in an 80,000 ft² tea packing factory that Bristol City Council gave to artists in 1996 on a 125 year lease at £1 per year. It is one of very few organisations to achieve an uplift in the 2014 Arts Council National Portfolio funding round.
- Case studies indicate that it is not possible to provide this kind of facility without either some kind of peppercorn arrangement **OR** substantial on-going public funding being in place. By advocating for the former we believe it is possible to create a resilient, sustainable model able to provide affordable workspace and still generate enough income to cover core costs. A long term lease or asset transfer is essential as it offers the security needed to attract the initial investment needed.
- Residential elements could also be included in the project, in particular live/work space for recent graduates/emerging artists and shorter term residency accommodation could generate income, create an 'onsite' community and offer models of support not currently available in the city.

17. <https://www.opendesk.cc/>

Space



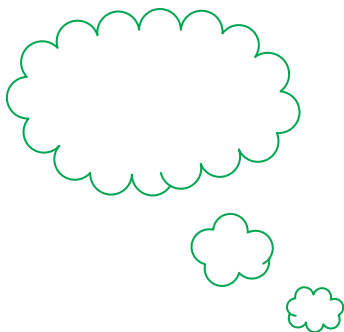
50 Studios



25 Co-Working Benches
(3D design)



25 Co-Working Desks
(2D design)



10 Creative Business Spaces

This outline is indicative and based on case studies across the UK and on the amount of space needed to generate rental income to cover core costs including staffing. Cost of rental at £5 per ft² is included to indicate the prohibitive costs involved if a peppercorn arrangement was not negotiated.

MINIMUM SHARED/ORGANISATIONAL SPACE NEEDED

	m ²	ft ²	Cost @ rent of £5 ft ² *
Wood workshop	150	1614	8070
Metal workshop	125	1345	6725
Digital workshop	125	1345	6725
Mixed media workshop (casting, plaster, wax, clay, resins)	80	861	4305
Print workshops (silk screen/etching/relief)	200	2152	10,760
Spraybooth (finishing, paints, extracted)	25	269	1345
Bookable, flexible making space	120	1291	6455
Community & education spaces	120	1291	6455
Events space/café	120	1291	6455
Offices	100	1076	5380
Storage/Plant room	100	1076	5380
Estimated circulation/public space (toilets etc)	560	6025	30125
Members space	40	430	2150
TOTAL	1865	20066	£100,330

WORKSPACE TO RENT

	m ²	ft ²	Cost @ rent of £5 ft ² *
50 Artist studios @ 200ft ² each	929	10000	50000
25 co-working making bench space @ 60ft ² each	139	1500	7500
25 Co-working desk spaces @ 60ft ² each	139	1500	7500
Space for Creative Businesses (office and workshop type)	464	5000	30000
TOTAL	1711	18430	£97,150

TOTAL SPACE

	m ²	ft ²	Cost @ rent of £5 ft ² *
Shared space	1865	20066	£100,330
Tenanted space	1711	18430	£97,150
TOTAL	3576	38496	£197,480

Users: Artists

Unlike most other major cities, including London, Bristol, Leeds, Glasgow, Newcastle and Nottingham there is no large-scale not-for-profit artists' workspace in Birmingham. This lack of professional facilities makes connecting artists' disparate networks to each other, and to a wider public who might commission, buy or engage with their work, incredibly difficult. A simple comparative online search highlights some of the barriers. An 'artist studio Birmingham' search on 30 May 2014 produced a first page of results which included two studio spaces – Birmingham Art Space in Aston and Grand Union in Digbeth – home to 16 artists in total. The same search for Bristol, a city that is less than half the size, produced a first page with 5 studio spaces housing 278 artists.¹⁸ Spike Island, which as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation is arguably the most prominent, is home to 70 artists, 25 designers and 35 arts businesses and welcomed over 7000 members of the public to its annual open studio weekend in May 2013, a huge audience actively engaging with creative and cultural work, and workers.

But there are artists working in Birmingham, a growing number of whom are producing bodies of work and projects that are nationally and internationally significant. There are still more who are emerging and impacting on the city – in the first year since the Birmingham Art Map was introduced in Summer 2013, 21 different artist-led projects have listed over 137 exhibitions and events, most of them free. Artists and artist-led organizations are creating Digbeth First Friday, commissioning the Birmingham Big Art Project, producing the Birmingham Art Map and leading proposals like this one.

David Throsby¹⁹ argues that a key distinction between the creative and cultural economies is that the output of cultural producers, like artists, are simultaneously private and public goods. Meaning that though artworks can be bought and sold through conventional markets like other 'products' they have additional content, what might best be described as 'intrinsic' value. Because of this 'mixed' status practitioners and businesses operating in these fields are unusual often pursuing objectives that are not simply economic, but conditioned by the cultural content of the output they are generating.

Birmingham's artists are an asset. They are supporters of Birmingham, affecting change, contributing to the civic economy and working together to make their city better but they are still not visible enough, meaning that the opportunity to fully capitalize on, and grow, this cultural capital is being missed. It is difficult to generate a sense of a critical mass when artists are dispersed, working in isolation or in small groups of less than 10. Initiatives like Eastside Projects' Extra Special People programme have been working to connect this community - currently around 50% of the 170 members are based in Birmingham with a further 30% living in the wider West Midlands – but the city urgently needs another space where attention can be focused; a large scale, permanent, professional workspace where practitioners can work together, share ideas, develop projects, meet each other, be ambitious and produce the work that ultimately their careers are built on.

Focus groups of established and emerging artists²⁰ identified the following needs:

- **AFFORDABLE RENT.** Contemporary art practice is highly speculative, income is low, and outgoings and fixed costs often relatively high. The majority of artists²¹ turnover less than £10,000 from their practice, 71% who had exhibited in a publicly-funded space in the previous three years did not receive a fee; for those artists who did receive an exhibition fee, over a third received £200 or less. Currently only a handful of artists in Birmingham have any form of commercial representation so opportunities to sell work are limited.
- Secure, insurable, watertight and heated **WORKSPACE** – when Glasgow Sculpture Studios moved into a heated building they saw studio usage increase by over a third (1447 sessions²²) statistics that demonstrate how this basic amenity affects productivity.

18. Comparative searches 30/05/14: Newcastle - four spaces, 145 artists, Manchester – five spaces, 150 artists.

19. *From Creative to Cultural Industries the Specific Characteristics of the Creative Industries.* David Throsby, 2008.

20. Focus groups held with Birmingham based established artists (19/11/13) and emerging artists (28/01/14)

21. *Paying Artists Report.* a-n magazine, 2014

22. *Trustees report 2012-13.* Glasgow Sculpture Studio.

- Different kinds of workspace that enable **FLEXIBLE WORKING** – many artists work on a project by project basis and so need to expand temporarily for short periods of time in response to opportunities. Spaces identified included individual and shared studios; flexible temporary space available on a short-term basis; ‘drop-in’ co-working desk and bench space.
- **WORKSHOPS** with equipment for production in wood, metal, casting, ceramics, surface finishing, print (paper and textiles) and digital making including access to software.
- Access to the specialist knowledge and technical capacity that exists in other sectors. Birmingham Production Space will supplement the core equipment and skills in the organisation, and the community who use it, by creating **NETWORKS** of individuals and companies with specialist expertise, brokering opportunities for artists and makers to access a wider range of processes and technical knowledge from other sectors, unlocking this resource and encouraging cross-innovation.
- Continuous professional development and **TRAINING** opportunities. There are virtually no affordable opportunities for artists, designers and makers to develop skills in a professional environment. This skill development is key to accessing and making use of digital technology, but also to other process – practices are not static and contemporary artists employ diverse materials and methodologies in response to ideas – rather than following the traditional linear model of ‘mastering a craft’. The nature of this sector and high levels of self-employment means nuanced business support is also needed. It could be argued this is a national issue.
- **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**. This relates to the previous point but extends to informal support in workshops, 1-2-1 ‘problem solving’ and access to fabrication services when practitioners do not have the experience, skills or inclination to produce a work themselves.

Cultural Producers

The city is home to a network of individuals and organizations who produce cultural work in various art-forms including Fierce Festival, Capsule, EC Arts, Flatpack Festival, BE festival, Eastside Projects, CLAB, Grand Union, Craftspace, Sampad, Friction Arts, Ikon Gallery and Vivid Projects. Many of these organizations work on a project-by-project basis and so need access to facilities for concentrated periods to produce artworks, props, theatre sets, installations and exhibition components. A few organizations, like Ikon Gallery, have their own in house workshops but would use the space for large-scale production and to access specialist processes and fabricators.

- This user group²³ do not necessarily want to come and make themselves; instead they need flexible, bookable **PROJECT SPACE** where project specific or large-scale work can be produced.
- They need access to **TECHNICAL EXPERTISE** and skilled **FABRICATORS** able to resolve technical challenges and produce work for them and the practitioners they work with.
- They are interested in **‘CURATED’ CO-WORKING** space, managed specifically to facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue and create the conditions that support and encourage collaboration and cross-fertilisation – drawing from models like the Pervasive Media Studio in Bristol.
- They see a café and events space, as crucial as a **SOCIAL HUB** where the creative community can come together is currently missing from Birmingham. This informal space is seen as essential to the development of new relationships which will help connect networks, encourage collaboration, improve communication and strengthen the whole creative and cultural sector.

- They identified a lack of accommodation for visiting artists, which often make programming residencies prohibitively expensive. **LIVE/WORK** accommodation would generate income for Birmingham Production Space and enable organisations to work with artists in new ways.

Designers

Design practitioners including architects, furniture makers, 3D designers, prop builders, craftspeople, illustrators and surface pattern designers are another key user group for Birmingham Production Space. In particular we anticipate sole traders, startups and other companies without the resources or capacity to develop their own workshops are likely to use these facilities to research and develop, prototype and make in order to develop their portfolios. Focus groups were held with 2D designers/illustrators and 3D designers/architects. It is worth noting that, similarly to artists, it is very difficult to locate sole trading practitioners, particularly since networks like Designer Maker West Midlands have ceased to function. Again Birmingham Production Space would develop visibility and broker connections for these practitioners.

2D DESIGNERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

- This group²⁴ tended to work from home and were not interested in co-working **SPACE** that “feels like I am going to work” – arguably an interesting design challenge, rather than a barrier. The domestic scale of their working environments meant that they were particularly interested in **FLEXIBLE**, bookable project space that could be rented temporarily, allowing them to experiment and explore ideas on a larger scale.
- They would use workshops, dropping in when appropriate – primarily printmaking but they also expressed an interest in 3D process which most of them had never had any chance to explore. They felt there was a need for **SKILLS** development generally and do not feel this is currently available to them. They felt it was crucial that facilities were of a **PROFESSIONAL** standard and able to support them to produce high quality commercial work and saw technical support and workshop management as key to this.
- Their perception was that there were few graduates staying in the city and setting up their own design businesses and that a space like this could facilitate the **MENTORING** and skill sharing which is needed to strengthen and network SME’s and sole traders in the design community.
- They felt there were real opportunities for Birmingham Production Space to **SELL** work and that it could offer a route to new markets and audiences.

3D DESIGNERS AND ARCHITECTS²⁵

- Architects felt that they would use the space’s making facilities in a number of ways; for model making, in particular to access digital process, and for 1-1 **PROTOTYPING** – an area which a number of them expressed a desire to expand. These both rely on the availability of tools and equipment along with skilled technical staff, but could provide valuable income streams as this work is currently outsourced but access to workshops would enable them to better explore possibilities through making.
- The 3D designers felt **FLEXIBLE**, bookable making space to expand into would be key, along with access to facilities that enabled them to prototype and make work to a **PROFESSIONAL** commercial standard. 3D workshops were essential, facilities for textile printing were also identified as being needed and this group thought they would be likely to use production facilities for short, **INTENSIVE** periods of time.
- This group felt that formal meeting, social and events space which facilitated **NETWORKING** was particularly important and currently lacking in the city.

24. Focus Group 30/04/14

25. Focus Group 19/05/14

- They also discussed how a space like Birmingham Production Space could be a **BRIDGE** between university and the professional world for young designers and felt this important function of the space made partnerships with regional HEI's key.
- Within the past three years, three new interdisciplinary practices have been established by graduates from the Birmingham School of Architecture. One of their core needs is temporary workspace with making facilities and technical support. This micro-group commented they would benefit from connections to a larger pool of experienced practitioners who they could draw on when tackling new technical, business, and logistical issues.
- Access to digital software (such as Adobe packages and other specialist/advanced applications such as Autodesk) was seen as an important factor in attracting users to the space.



Birmingham is the youngest major city in Europe – 45% of our population is under the age of 30.

Over 6,000 of Birmingham City University's students, are enrolled on creative and cultural courses annually and they produce more graduate talent in these areas than anywhere else outside London offering a total of 133 undergraduate and postgraduate courses falling within the fields of cultural and creative industries. This provision is complemented regionally by Art and Design faculties at Coventry University, Wolverhampton University, Warwickshire College and Worcester University and the pool of talent is extended further by those who study elsewhere and return to the region post graduation and those who take alternative routes into the sector including creative apprenticeships.

Patterns of work and career development in the creative and cultural sectors are non-linear. Nesta found²⁶ that 40% of those working within the arts also held a second job and that there are high rates of self-employment, project based work and work linked to underlying personal networks.

Birmingham Production Space will create pathways so young people can directly engage and interact with individuals who work in this way and broker formal and informal relationships between the small/micro creative businesses which dominate the sector and individuals, schools and providers of education or training.

BIRMINGHAM PRODUCTION SPACE WILL:

- Develop relationships with schools and regional FE/HEI's; offer practical **WORKSHOPS** for young people; **CPD** for teachers, lecturers and technical staff; events focussed on routes into **CAREERS** in art and design; support the delivery of Arts Award; offer enrichment activities at all levels.
- Through arrangements with regional Universities, workshops and resources could be made available to students through a **BESPOKE MEMBERSHIP** programme allowing them to become familiar with creativity and enterprise in a professional context, meet practitioners and better understand the opportunities the city can offer. An identifiable 'base' offers a sense of security and community and so familiarity with the post-university context will give graduates more confidence to pursue their own creative ambitions in the region.²⁷
- **TRAIN** and **MENTOR** young people. We have identified a number of interesting models including the workshop based apprenticeship established by the Leicester Print Workshop; short term traineeships offered at South Kilburn studios and London Sculpture Workshop's tailored educational programmes for Crisis.

26. *The Art Of Innovation*. Nesta, 2008.

27. Focus Group 19/05/14

- Partner with charities, CIC's and Social Enterprises to **FACILITATE** initiatives that make use of Birmingham Production Space's facilities. For example Craftspace's recent project 'Making My Home' – where young people who had recently left care and/or were vulnerably housed worked with each other, assisted by professional artists, to explore the creative practices of upcycling, remaking and repurposing. Or a project like Black Country Make in Wolverhampton which would see facilities used to directly impact on the environment of those living in the area.
- **PARTNER** with existing arts development programmes working with young people including Canon Hill Collective, Ikon Youth Programme and Extra Special People to host and co-produce events and activity.
- Develop **INTERGENERATIONAL** skill sharing opportunities for older people to teach young people and vice versa.
- Create spaces within the organisation to **EMPOWER** young people to take ownership by taking a cue from projects like Room 13 where a studio is set up and run by a committee of young people who work with an artist in residence to produce art work, exhibitions, commissions and projects.²⁸

Industry and Community

Birmingham, 'the city of a thousand trades', has a rich history of manufacturing, craftsmanship and production. From Matthew Boulton's Soho Manufactory, which pioneered the combination and mechanization of previously separate manufacturing activities under one roof, to the thousands of small scale workshops which remained the typical Birmingham manufacturing unit throughout the 18th century the city's history is one of innovation and entrepreneurship.

This is still evidenced by the coat of arms on which two 'supporters', an artist and an engineer, visually articulate Birmingham's twin pillars of creativity and industry. Metal spinners, cabinetmakers and powder coaters still work alongside city centre retail developments, digital and tech companies and artist-led galleries in areas like Digbeth creating a dynamic urban environment where many different modes of contemporary production exist simultaneously.

BIRMINGHAM PRODUCTION SPACE WILL:

- Offer users access to high quality in house facilities and a wider network of companies and individuals with specialist skills. Though we aim to be the national centre for production we want to be the **BIRMINGHAM** Production Space.
- With sustainability, environmental impact and the *local industrial linkage* model in mind we will focus on creating a **LOCAL** supply chain where as many aspects of production as possible can be facilitated within Birmingham, the Black Country and surrounding area. This will increase trade for local material suppliers and manufacturers and provide opportunities for cross innovation and marketing.
- Offer **PROTOTYPING** and design development opportunities to small businesses either directly, or indirectly by acting as a broker between companies and creatives housed within, or connected to, the organisation.
- Capitalize on the unique **SKILLS** available in the region by offering a programme of public 'master classes' and short courses; engage with **DIVERSE** communities so specific skills and knowledge located in different communities or demographics (for example retired people) can be shared; encourage **CROSS SECTORAL** conversations by asking engineers to teach artists and artists to teach engineers.
- Offer space for community or third sector led **GROUPS** like 'Men in Sheds' which see different people meet and make together in

28. <http://www.room13hareclive.org.uk/home>

a supportive, social environment and offer additional benefits like combating isolation in older people.

- Work in partnership with existing community groups and third sector organisations to facilitate projects, which take cues from making-led initiatives like *Black Country Make*, and work to empower the **COMMUNITY**, create system change and unlock the potential of people to impact on the environment they live in.



Next Steps



We believe that what we have set out in this document is ambitious but achievable; the challenges that face us are substantial and the support of key stakeholders including Birmingham City Council, GBSLEP, Arts Council England and Birmingham City University will be essential.

WE SUGGEST THREE NEXT STEPS FOCUSING ON

1. Securing a building on a peppercorn rent in order to create an organization that is financially sustainable in the long term.

ACTION: We need to work with Birmingham City Council to identify what buildings could be made available and on what basis.

2. Securing substantial capital investment to cover the costs of converting the building once identified.

ACTION: We need to work with partners including GBSLEP, Arts Council England and Birmingham City University to identify what routes to funding exist and how to access them.

3. Creating a network of support, a community of future users and connections into industry.

ACTION: We will hold a public event at Eastside Projects on 16 December, 2014 to test the idea with the creative and cultural community and those from other sectors who might engage with Birmingham Production Space. Additionally we are designing a prototype project that aims to develop links between artists, makers and designers and regional industry and manufacturing.



Imagine



The Birmingham Production Space is open and you are a mid career artist based in the building.

You walk to the Production Space from New Street Station pausing to say hi to John, the metal fabricator up the road who ran the TIG welding workshop you went on last month. You go into the building, swipe in and stop off at the café to see what's for lunch, as always there are two options, you plump for veggie chilli, grab a coffee and then walk to your studio. The doors to all the studios are transparent and as you walk through the corridors you notice that the artist in residence from Germany has been printing on concrete, which is a material you are working with so you make a mental note to chat to her about that at lunch. You unlock your studio, log onto the wifi and open up your laptop to catch up with your emails for 30 minutes – you have a show coming up in London so there's a lot to organize.

At ten o'clock the workshops open so you wander down, passing the community space where a group of young people from Highgate are talking through ideas for laser cut signage that they are designing for their estate with students from the School of Architecture at Birmingham City University. The workshops are bustling already, a couple of freelancers are fabricating a large wooden seating structure for Eastside Projects' next show, Lucy McLauchlan is building some stretchers, Stax Creations are making bespoke tables for a new bar on Hurst Street and Simon and Tom Bloor are in the casting area working on models of their latest public art work. You swipe in and set yourself up on one of the benches next to the TIG welder and start welding.

You stop for communal lunch at 12.30 and grab a seat next to the German residency artist and introduce yourself. You chat about printing on cast surfaces and realize that you both plan to go to an event at Grand Union this evening. You swap numbers and arrange to walk over together. On the way out she mentions that she wants to have a piece of glass mirrored so you suggest she talks to Duttons Glass on Holloway Head and draw her a map.

Back in the workshop your studio assistant Apexa comes in for the afternoon, she shows you a CAD drawing she's been working on for you, it looks good so you send her off to book onto the 3D printer. You carry on welding and a couple of hours later she comes back with the first prototype and tells you that the Digital technician suggested you consider outputting in a different material, so you both take a stroll over to the workshop to look at samples. On the way over you talk about the application she is making for a residency in Scotland that you did five years ago – you chat about your experience and offer to look over her submission when she's drafted it.

The digital studio is busy – the young people from Highgate are being introduced to the facilities ready for a workshop tomorrow, someone from K4 Architects is outputting a scale model prototype on the 3D printer and Nikki Pugh is soldering a circuit board in the corner. The workshop assistant shows you a series of samples and explains that though they can't output into all the materials on site, she knows a firm in Aston who can and who offer special rates for Production Space users. You look at your watch and realize that it's 4.30, and you are late for your meeting with An Endless Supply about the publication for your show, so you leave Apexa to get the contact details and sprint to the co-working space where they are waiting for you. The first draft looks pretty good so you talk through some changes and their idea for a screen-printed insert, which they have arranged to test tomorrow in the print studio. You leave happy and head back to the metal workshop, pack up your stuff and drop your tools off to the studio before meeting the German residency artist for a quick drink in the café and heading out for the evening.

Contributors

This proposal outlines an ambitious vision that would create jobs, develop creative and cultural businesses and transform the landscape for artists, makers and designers in Birmingham. We believe our city should make space for creative producers and hope this document will be the start of a conversation, lead to new partnerships and, most importantly, actions which will enable us to realize our vision and make Birmingham Production Space a reality.

This proposal is led by Ruth Claxton, artist and Associate Director at Eastside Projects and has been developed following a period of research and development, funded by Arts Council England, which included meetings with focus groups in Birmingham and visits to existing models across the UK. It is also informed by the experience of Eastside Projects, a gallery space in Digbeth which is run by practicing artists and designers, and in particular draws on knowledge built up over years observing the career trajectories of members of Extra Special People, a programme which supports the professional development of artists in the region and beyond.

This experience is complemented by that of many other individuals who have contributed to the proposal's development including Alessandro Columbano and Mike Dring from the School of Architecture at Birmingham City University who run Co.LAB, a 'live' design initiative which over the last three years has produced work on a range of scales in different contexts across the city; Sean O'Keeffe, ex-course Director of the BA Art and Design course at Birmingham City University and printmaking specialist; Jenny Moore, project manager and Co-founder of Capsule; Gavin Wade, Artist Curator and Director of Eastside Projects; Jo Capper co-founder of Bearwood Pantry; Matthew Higginbottom, Director of Queen and Crawford Art Fabricators and numerous artists, designers, architects and cultural producers who have contributed both through focus groups and informal conversations.

The proposal has been informed by visits and interviews that took place between March and May 2014 with staff at:

Spike Island (Bristol) www.spikeisland.org.uk
Pervasive Media Studio (Bristol) www.watershed.co.uk/pmstudio/about-pervasive-media-studio
Spike Print Studio (Bristol), www.spikeprintstudio.org
Leicester Print Workshop www.leicesterprintworkshop.com
London Sculpture Workshop www.londonsculptureworkshop.org
Makerversity (London) www.makerversity.co.uk
Building Bloqs (London) www.buildingbloqs.wordpress.com
Blackhorse Workshop (London) www.blackhorseworkshop.co.uk
Grymsdyke Farm (Buckinghamshire) www.grymsdykefarm.com
Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop <http://edinburghsculpture.org>
Glasgow Print Studio <http://glasgowprintstudio.co.uk>
Glasgow Sculpture Studios <http://glasgowsculpturestudios.org>
Maklab (Glasgow) www.maklab.co.uk