Figure 20 illustrates that, other than in the very early years of business, there is no general correlation between experience and time spent in business and earnings. As this survey is a snapshot in time, the patterns of artists’ earnings may reflect changes in the market for visual arts products rather than patterns of earnings related to experience. However, none of the visual artists working for two years or less earn more than £15,000 gross per annum. A small proportion of the more experienced visual artists achieved gross earnings over £30,000 per annum.

**Figure 20: Earnings in relation to age of business**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>&lt; 1</th>
<th>1-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-15</th>
<th>16-20</th>
<th>&gt; 20</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Income (000's)</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n=14</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n=17</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£11-15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£16-20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£21-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£26-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>66.7</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: University of Leeds

Figure 21 summarises the average contribution to total earnings of the various activities undertaken by visual artists. Creative work accounts, on average, for just over 62% of all income. The value of other employment is also highlighted here, accounting for 24% of income. This is despite the fact that the time spent on this area represents only 18% of the whole (Fig 18). These higher earnings from other non-creative employment activities are therefore subsidising creative activity.

**Figure 21: Sources of income**
Figure 22 summarises the sources of creative and creative-related income. Approximately 41%, on average, of all creative income is derived from private sales and exhibitions, through galleries or through private commissions. If commissions by public bodies are added, the figure rises to 60%. Of the other sources, approximately 34% is made from time engaged in related creative activities, such as community workshops, workshop facilitation and teaching.

**Figure 22: Sector income from creative activity**

- Private commissions 9.3%
- Sales to arts and crafts outlets (eg galleries) 16.7%
- Private commissions 9.3%
- Commissions by public bodies 19.0%
- Related creative activities (eg community workshops, workshop facilitation, teaching) 34.4%
- Exhibitions and shows 5.7%
- Bursaries and fellowships 1.7%
- Competitions and prizes 0.3%
- Other 4.1%
- Sales of work direct to the public 8.8%

In addition, respondents were asked to provide details of their net income. Figure 23 shows that the average net income of 83% of respondents is less than £10,000 per annum. This includes the 39% of all respondents who make a loss in an average year. Of the known replies, no-one makes over £25,000 net in an average year.

Net income is the income made from creative activity, after deducting the money spent on creative-related items, such as rent, materials, and utilities. The fact that nearly 40% of artists make a loss from their creative activity reveals again the importance of incomes earned from other sources.

**Figure 23: Annual net income of respondents**

- A loss (n=30) 39%
- Under £5k (n=22) 28.6%
- £5-10k (n=12) 15.6%
- £11-15k (n=4) 5.2%
- £16-20k (n=3) 3.9%
- £21-25k (n=1) 1.3%
- No reply (n=5) 6.4%
Figure 24 is a comparison of gross and net incomes and illustrates the difficulties involved in making a living from visual arts activities.

**Figure 24: A comparison of gross and net incomes**

Although tenants testified to the general insecurity of their tenancies, there is a relatively well-established longevity to some tenancies. Nearly 38% of respondents had been in residence in the mid- to long-term, i.e. three years or more. However, figure 25 does show that over 62% of respondents have been in residence for less than two years. 39% of respondents have been in residence less than one year. These figures are influenced by the comparatively high proportion of returns from artists based at Yorkshire ArtSpace, which opened late in 2001. As 26 of these artists had been resident in their previous space prior to this research, the figure for those resident for less than one year is likely to be significantly less than appears below.

**Figure 25: Length of residency in current workspaces**
4. The future development of shared artists’ workspaces

Section four concludes the report by looking at factors affecting the future development of shared workspaces. It highlights factors inhibiting development and areas of potential improvement as identified by both tenants and studio group representatives.

A third of the sample expressed dissatisfaction with their current workspace. The types of dissatisfaction tend to be quite practical. Figure 26 demonstrates that of the 27 respondents, the largest source of dissatisfaction was the size of the space itself. Other causes included the lack of heating, the fact that the lease on the space was too short, or that the building in which the workspace is based is in a state of disrepair.

Figure 26: Expressions of workspace dissatisfaction
Figure 27 identifies what artists thought would be of greatest assistance to them to develop their business. The two most valuable aids to professional development were regarded as acquiring a suitable agent (55%) and access to a development worker to help with funding bids and offer marketing advice (51%). There are two observations to be made about this. First, that business development considerations appear to outweigh workspace development considerations. For example, a secured tenancy represented only 17% of returns and a better quality of workspace only 21%. Access to independent representation, someone to advocate and facilitate on their behalf, is therefore seen as a priority issue for artists.

Examples of responses given in the other category are ‘more time to develop ideas’, ‘someone arranging exhibitions, sales, access etc’ and ‘Time. Current family life very demanding’.

Figure 27: Priority assistance for tenants

Figure 28 represents the opinions of studio representatives on how their workspace can make a greater impact in their locality. In some ways it reflects the findings of Figure 27. For example, the availability of a business development worker (53%) again features highly. Similarly, better basic facilities were a priority for only 20% of respondents. Other key priorities highlighted were a raised profile of the artists and their work (53%) and an availability of equipment to support businesses, such as computers, telephones and fax machines (33%). 47% also expressed the belief that policy makers involved in regeneration had to involve local artists in project planning.

Figure 28: Priority issues for community development (studio representatives)
Figure 29 highlights the priority areas of potential improvement of the workspace itself as identified by tenants. It shows that the majority of tenants are concerned with improving the physical state of their facilities.

Over a quarter of tenants would like to see better basic facilities within workspaces. Examples here include heating and running water. Improved maintenance of inadequate buildings was also frequently cited. Mending leaking roofs and windows, rewiring and damp proofing were typical responses here. Other priority areas included creating space both within and outside the building for better storage, improving the physical appearance of the building through improved lighting or redecoration and acquiring security of tenure.

Examples of comments include:

“Condition of building needs attention”

“Improvements to basic facilities. Better landlord. Funding for storage/IT and help to get funding”

Of less importance to tenants was improving the way the workspace is perceived by, and interacts with, residents in its locality. However, small numbers did wish to see improved access to the workspace by the public and to gain a higher profile within their locality.

“Greater cultural recognition with the community as a way of improving quality of life in the city environment”
Figure 30 highlights the priority areas of potential improvement as identified by studio representatives. Although this group were similarly concerned to improve facilities within the workspaces and secure a permanent home, this group had some slightly different priorities to workspace occupiers.

Unlike the tenants who were concerned with developing their individual business, the studio contacts were primarily interested in becoming more involved with the public. They suggested that better access to buildings and more involvement with the public was of prime importance.

“If the mill owner could be encouraged via regeneration opportunities to improve the building, in particular the access for the public, we could expand our exhibition programme and run classes/workshops. Also become a more regular venue for arts events in the area”

Another priority area for studio contacts was access to a specialist worker who could assist them strategically in their development plans.

“The most important thing would be to find a permanent home for the studios in the Leeds area that still remained affordable and finding funding to employ someone with the expertise to research and implement various solutions that would be available to us”

Figure 30: Priority areas of potential improvement (studio representatives)
5. Recommendations

■ The findings indicate that at present small numbers of artists are actively involved in the running and development of shared workspaces. This has significance for the long-term development of these facilities. There appears to be a distinction between a small number of artists who are focused on developing their business or the relationship between the workspace and the community, and a much larger group who appear content with the status quo. As such artists often work side by side and workspace provision is less than abundant there appears to be a tension for the future direction of these organisations. Consultation with individual members would seem necessary alongside any packages of support.

■ The survey highlights the economic reality of visual artists and their earning potential. Whilst it would be difficult to suggest at present that artists are a major economic contributor, advocates might emphasise that they clearly have a large social and cultural benefit to their localities. These benefits include being providers of cultural activities, and offering a support network for locally based artists.

■ One of the most difficult issues facing the future development of the sector is the predominance of workspace provision based in buildings owned by private landlords. As the property is largely uninhabitable by other businesses due to access and location issues, and artists appear unable to pay higher rents, it is difficult to see how landlords might be encouraged to invest further. Any future provision should be, according to artists, low cost space with basic amenities provided, available on a secured tenancy.

■ Many respondents have suggested that they lack the time, skills or motivation to be involved in business developmental work. As the concentrations of artists is relatively small in individual studio groups, a designated development worker for each workspace would seem unfeasible. However, a solution might be access to a shared region-wide peripatetic support worker. Useful support could be provided through developing funding bids, marketing advice and negotiating with outlets for sales.

■ These findings highlight that the longer artists have worked the more likely they are to occupy shared workspace. There are limited facilities for young start-ups in the region. Some studios did demonstrate an interest in supporting new artists but felt the pressure of their own work impacted on their ability to support them adequately. Studios would find access to a designated peripatetic development worker to assist new entrants useful.

■ This study has provided an initial insight into the motivations and economic reality of working as a visual artist in Yorkshire and the Humber. The survey was designed to elicit opinions and attitudes. However, it has highlighted the tension that appears to exist between a broader development agenda for the visual arts sector and the aspirations and expectations of a majority of the artists based in shared workspaces.
6. References


