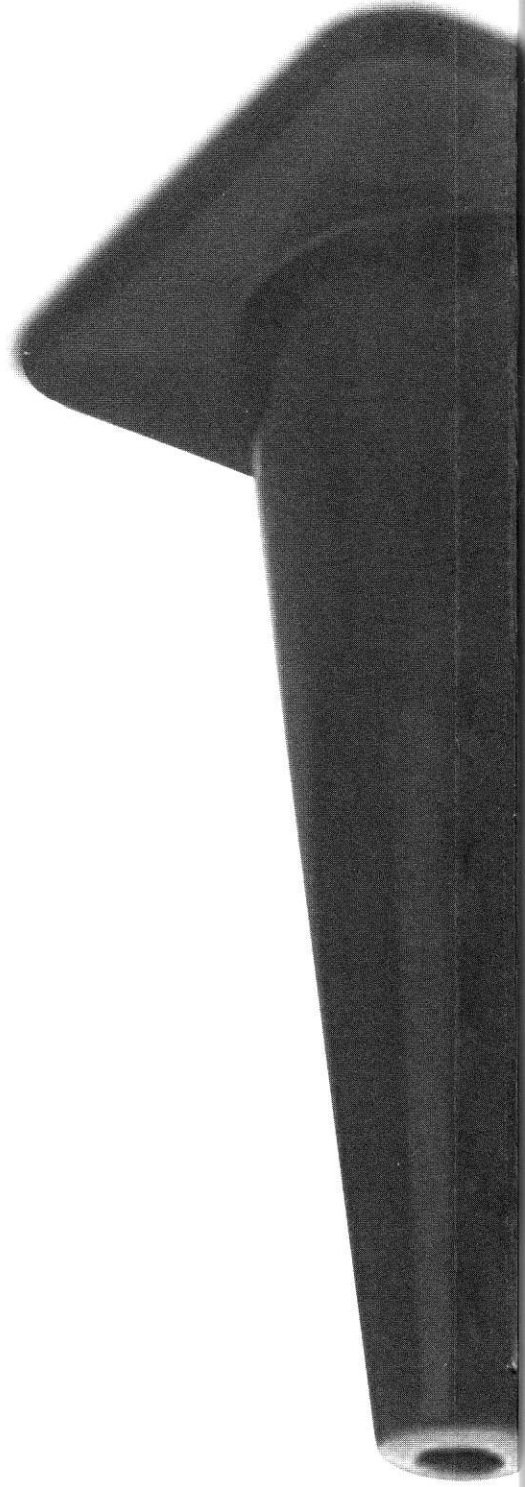


situation vacant



Artist Run Galleries and Studio Spaces in the Inner City

Perth 1960-96¹

by Allison Archer

The city of Perth has developed a notorious record for demolishing its past and thumbing its nose at preservation of our architectural heritage. All in the name of progress and redevelopment. Whilst this in itself is nothing new when compared to other major Australian cities, what makes it particularly devastating here in Perth is that this city did not have the vast number of buildings to support such redevelopment. Too often when buildings were demolished, they were the only, or the best, example of a particular architectural style within the inner city.

However, redevelopment did facilitate many artists entry into the city. Buildings, both commercial and residential, were allowed to deteriorate (with later development in mind) providing cheap accommodation and studio spaces within walking distance to the heart of Perth. A central location was also appealing to artists who wished to work together, for both intellectual and financial support, in co-operatives and studios, where a lease and bills would be shared. Unfortunately the temporal nature of many of these studio spaces, as well as their transient populations, has resulted in very few permanent records being kept to trace the history of artist's spaces in Perth.

¹Much of the research for this essay and chronology has relied on interviews and conversations with various artists. Thus, there will inevitably be information which is slightly inaccurate or that is inconsistent with someone else's memory of places and events. Additional information and corrections are welcomed. Please write to Allison Archer, c/o 68 Drew Street, Albany WA 6330.

East Perth became increasingly run down and dilapidated throughout the 1950s as the vogue for inner city living was replaced by the desire for a suburban lifestyle on a quarter acre block. Being a light industrial area did not add to its appeal either. However its inexpensive rents and proximity to the city made it a popular location for artist's studios. Many art students and artists combined their studios and homes in shops and old houses during the early 1960s around the Claisebrook area. Hans Arkeveld recalled that Peter Walker and others were in a shop near the Claisebrook Hotel, which was a popular venue for social gatherings and parties.²

Claisebrook Hotel

In the Claisebrook Hotel itself, Murray Grosvenor and others had studios, and around the corner, Hans Arkeveld with another student had a house which they used as studios and living quarters. In all there were about eight students in close proximity to each other, painting, drawing and most importantly, drawing on the experiences of working together, exchanging ideas and learning from each other. From here Arkeveld went to the Royal Arcade in Perth, on the corner of Hay and Barrack Streets, with his friend and fellow student David Hughes. This location was not a long term option, and they shortly thereafter found themselves back in East Perth, near the Post Office, in attics of a row of old townhouses. Several other artists also had attics, including Neil Sellick, Gordon Koh, Hughie Childs and Ron Widdell, an early printmaker who also lectured at the Claremont School of Art. Arkeveld stayed at this popular location for a couple of years, circa 1963 to 1964, before visiting Papua New Guinea with Hughes.

On Arkeveld and Hughes' return from PNG, they located themselves in a row of shops on Bulwer Street in Northbridge. Arkeveld had a

² The Claisebrook Hotel was sold to the government and closed in April 1996. It awaits demolition.

shop near the corner of William Street, Hughes had one second from the end at the other corner, and Arkeveld's brother Keys, had his next to Hughes. The three of them had a spacious area each, with a yard at the rear, for four dollars each per week. They stayed for a couple of years, 1967 to 1968 before the shops were renovated, and they once again had to move on. This time to Leederville, where Hughes and Arkeveld rented a house together. From here Arkeveld moved to Canterbury Court in the early 1970s, only to be evicted shortly thereafter. Arkeveld and Hughes ultimately decided they required something less transient than temporary rentals, and purchased land in Chidlow where they built a studio/shed each to which they slowly made additions over the following years.

Canterbury Court

Canterbury Court, located at 36-38 Beaufort Street, Northbridge, became artist studios in the early 1970s. The Court consisted of a central arcade with two floors of shops, all deserted apart from a printing firm who used some ground floor shops, one upstairs resident, the caretaker, and the street front lunch bar and an Amnesty International second hand shop. Con Nanon initiated the studios when he moved into Canterbury Court Arcade, into an upstairs studio, in early 1971. He was closely followed by Elaine Steele, who shared his studios for a few months, then by Clive Croft, Linda Carroll and Vanda Vas, all Claremont School of Art graduates. Theo Koning moved into a first floor studio in early 1972, whilst still a second year student at Claremont School of Art. His space had previously been Doyle's Fancy Dress Shop and, like Nanon, he also lived without permission in his studio.

Hans Arkeveld leased a studio on the first floor, opposite Koning, shortly thereafter and met regularly with other artists. However, this proved to be short lived, the first floor to the rear of Canterbury Court was



The site of Beach Gallery & Canterbury Court Studios, Beaufort St., Northbridge

condemned in late 1972 or early 1973, due to the unsafe nature of the verandah walkway, and Nanon, Croft, Vass and Carroll were evicted due to faulty wiring in their studios. Koning moved to Dennis Street, Subiaco, and Arkeveld to Chidlow. In August 1973 Campbell Cornish acquired a ground floor shop as a studio and stayed until December 1989 when he, along with a new influx of artists, were evicted and the building demolished.

The artists who had studios in the Canterbury Court during the early 1970s could not be labelled as a cohesive group, or as a co-operative. Nor did they exhibit together or engage in critical dialogue about their art. Koning believes the closest he came to being involved in a group at this stage was when he and two friends, David Francis and John Paul, would meet in the city and discuss their work, including the effects of their inner city environment upon it. Francis had a studio at the rear of a building, next door to the infamous Scarlet Garter, just up from the QV1 building at the top of Hay Street in Perth, where his father worked for the Chubb Security Safe business. Paul was in the

Eagle Star Insurance Building at the top of Saint Georges Terrace, which virtually backed onto the building that Francis was in. Together they held an exhibition named *3 x 1*, in 1974 at the Fremantle Arts Centre, based on their discussions.

Murray Mews

Yet there was clearly a need for an artists group or co-operative to provide an alternative to the more formal art societies and existing galleries in Perth. Jeff Jones arrived in Perth from the United Kingdom in 1974, with a contemporary arts background which included performance, minimal and conceptual art. These were very much at odds with the contemporary art scene in Perth, which consisted of imitative abstract expressionism and colour field painting adopted from the United States via the United Kingdom and Europe. Jones, along with Rie Heymans, Neil Hollis and Ashley Jones, established the Fine Art Printworkshop in Perth with a grant from the Western Australian Arts Council in late 1974 or early 1975. Although they preferred Fremantle as a venue, due to the amount of cheap unoccupied spaces, the Council insisted that they find somewhere in Perth. Two sites were found in Murray Mews, off Murray Street, where the rent ranged between fifteen and seventeen dollars per week. Jones chose one set of rooms for the Printworkshop and approached the Council for another grant to establish a multi-faceted arts body in the rooms across the arcade, but his proposal was rejected as the Council decided there would be a conflict of interests if he was involved in two projects.

Mark Grey-Smith returned from overseas during this period, and he along with Jones, and other interested parties organised a meeting at Grey-Smith's father's beach house in Quinns Rock to discuss the notion of setting up an alternative arts organisation. Thus Praxis was loosely formed and established itself as an artists co-operative, using



The site of the original Praxis, Murray Mews, Murray St., Perth

the second set of vacant rooms in Murray Mews. The space consisted of two rooms divided by a large archway, and a small washroom, which were used for performances, jazz fusion nights, poetry recitals (often combined with jazz fusion) and exhibitions. Original members included Theo Koning, Jeff Jones, Mark Grey-Smith, Judy Chambers, Kim Humphries, John Worth and Peter Jeffreys, the latter organising most of the mixed media events at Praxis.

In May 1975 the Praxis co-operative held their first art exhibition, a group show, in this new space. Artists involved in this exhibition included; Theo Koning, Mark Grey-Smith, Judy and Doug Chambers, Brian Blanchflower, Bob Dorrizi, Mac Betts, Bob Birch, Peter Shasson, Marie Hobbs, Geoff Buchan and Chris Capper. As these names suggest, Praxis incorporated several of Perth's most exciting and alternative artists; Capper and Koning had just recently graduated, and Blanchflower had only been in Australia since 1972. Koning's first solo exhibition was held here in July 1975, an installation entitled *From*

Winter Storm, consisting of the flotsam and jetsam washed up on beaches during winter.³

Praxis

The first incarnation of Praxis lasted a mere six months, with problems arising from general apathy towards taking the co-operative seriously and paying the minimal rent. At the end of 1975 another meeting was held, a committee formed and the Praxis Group established. Judy Chambers replaced Koning as Treasurer and Ted Snell, recently returned from the United Kingdom, also became involved. Jeff Jones held the first exhibition, of this new evolution of Praxis, in the same venue. It consisted of an installation/performance piece, using two German female models, entitled *Life Class*. Other exhibitions that followed *Life Class* included the *Light Show*, the *Ego Show*, and the *Found*



Media space, Goderich St, East Perth

³ Unfortunately the beach sand which leaked between the floor boards into the photographer's studio beneath, did not endear them to the real estate managers. Complaints had already been made earlier about the noise and wild going ons that accompanied some of the poetry/performance nights that verged on punk cacophonies.

Object Show. Hans Arkeveld was also an early member of Praxis and was included in the group exhibition, the *Found Object Show*.

During this period the Fine Art Printworkshop continued to operate, sometimes in conjunction with Praxis, printing posters for their exhibitions and events. However in February 1977 Praxis lost the use of Murray Mews, and the third incarnation of Praxis spent the following three years exhibiting sporadically at the Western Australian Institute of Technology (now Curtin University of Technology) and the Undercroft Gallery at the University of Western Australia. Some six months after Praxis was evicted from Murray Mews, the Printworkshop was also asked to leave, and re-established themselves at 444 William Street, in Highgate. By the time of their relocation, Ashley Jones had left the group, leaving a core of Jeff Jones, Judy Chambers and Neil Hollis. In 1977 a new arrival to Perth from the United Kingdom became the fourth member, Paul Thomas.

The Art Office was another artists' collaborative project which involved studio spaces and an exhibition area. Artists involved included Con Nanon and Clive Croft, formerly from the Canterbury Court studios. Alana McLarty, possibly better known for her outrageous performances as the gaudily clad Artwoman, was also involved. The Art Office was established at 62 Saint Georges Terrace, on the second floor, in the late 1970s and had exhibitions such as the third "Baboomba Annual Invitation Art Award", held in November 1979.

In 1981 Praxis (in conjunction with the W.A. Art Workers Union) received government funding from the Visual Arts Board and established themselves in Fremantle, after actively seeking a location in Perth, to no avail. However, many local artists who went on to be involved in inner city art studios, exhibition spaces and housing during the 1980s, exhibited at Praxis during the early to mid 1980s.

Media Space

1981 was also the year that Media Space formed, evolving out of the Fine Art Printworkshop. From there it expanded into 51-52 Goderich Street in 1983. The core members of this group, Jeff Jones, Paul Thomas and Judy Chambers, established Media Space to investigate art practice within an isolated regional environment, and to attempt to form an environment more sympathetic to contemporary art practice. Their shared studio spaces, at the above locations, enabled them to create both group and individual artworks of an alternative nature to the norm in Perth. Allan Vizents also became a member of Media Space, often assuming the role of spokesperson, even though their original idea was that the group should be ego-less and operate as a unified whole.

Vizents wrote the following about Media Space shortly before his death in 1987:

There was a physical context of Media Space that developed over some five years. A battleship was constructed to sail through Perth, self-sufficient, independent, and containing vital life-support systems for professional activity. This did not mean independent studios for individuals. Media Space was not a collective in the sense of artists combining resources to maintain their independence from one another. When resources were combined it was both - and, to benefit the group, to purchase vital equipment, books or materials, and to facilitate the work of individuals toward aims held by the group. These aims were argued, not easily imposed without conflict.

The Goderich Street location combined the Print Workshop from William Street with Media Space facilities. There was a photographic darkroom, screen press, etching press, sound studio, design studio, research library and archives, computers, and a photocopier. One room



Entertainment House, Hay St West Perth

was left for meetings, usually on Friday afternoons. This room could also be used for the construction of installations and exhibitions.⁴

Media Space dissolved in 1987, the year after Allan Vizents' departure for Sydney, amidst the general realisation that Perth lacked the critical audience necessary for their work.

Entertainment House

Entertainment House, at 1142 Hay Street in West Perth, was another venue utilised by local artists. It had previously been used by doctors, and was also the site of the Johnny Young Talent School until about 1983. It had been empty for a couple of years when Ken Rasmussen, who lived nearby at the time, took up the lease in 1985, the year after he graduated from art school. He had originally planned to find a studio for himself within an established co-operative, but after approaching several, to no avail, decided to form one himself. He was joined by Deane Ball and Kerry Stokes. Stokes had been trying to organise a group studio herself, which fell through, and was thus able to find artists to rent the extra rooms for Rasmussen.

⁴ Vizents, "On a need to know basis", *Praxis M*, # 16, 1987, p.5.

Other artists that had studios in the Entertainment House building included Nick Beames, Pam Kleeman, Pippa Lightfoot, Ivan Bray, two architecture students and writer Tim Winton. Together they set out to provide each other with peer support, to share costs and to have a space that was relatively free from external interference. Peter Saxon also had a studio in this building, in the second floor room that Bray moved out of, but preferred to work in isolation and did not actively interact with the other artists.

The location of their studios provided the Entertainment House artists with walking distance access to central city exhibitions and amenities, as well as other artist's studios. Their administrative structure was loosely based on a co-operative, they received no funding, with the artists meeting either on demand or on a monthly basis. However rent increases in 1986/87 forced the artists to seek new studios and Rasmussen sublet the floor to graphic designers until 1988 when he moved in and lived there with his wife until 1990. Since then the building has been used by Wren Press and by a lifestyle magazine.

Artemis

Another group of artists, named Artemis, also used Entertainment House as a meeting site during this period. Kleeman was involved in the formation of this group in 1985, and was joined by Stokes and later by Lightfoot. Artemis was a membership based organisation which formed for -

women interested in the promotion and support of women's contemporary art practice in W.A....(and to provide) a platform for women to discuss and express concerns about their type of practice in a supportive, non-threatening environment. ...objectives include broadening awareness of women's social and cultural issues, promoting community awareness of women's contribution to the arts, acting as a contact group for women in the arts, and

activating critical appraisal of patriarchal culture and its effect on art history, practice and theory.⁵

From Entertainment House they shifted to Lacey Street in East Perth until finally relocating in the Cultural Centre, next to PICA in 1989. Pam Kleeman was a driving force behind Artemis, as well as being their Arts Resource Officer. Memberships swelled over the first two years to 80 by 1987, including many of Perth's eminent female artists: Ros Drake-Brockman, Valerie Tring, Helen Taylor, Michelle Elliot, Nola Farman, Tania Ferrier and Penny Bovell amongst many others.

The location of Artemis in a Cultural Centre building, which they named Artshouse, provided members with an exhibition space, child care, and meeting rooms. The group disbanded in 1991, but the exhibition space remains the same in name and location, providing an inner city exhibition space to young West Australian artists of both genders.

During the 1980s a proliferation of studios and exhibition spaces emerged in the inner city. When Rasmussen was looking for a studio, in 1985, he recalled that there were artists, including André Lipscombe, in the three story 1920s building on the corner of Wellington and Barrack Streets. There were others above the pizza bar on the corner of Milligan and Hay Streets, and more in an old building (owned by the Main Roads Department) on Wellington Street, near WAAMA, the Aboriginal radio station.⁶ At least six artists, including Carmela Corvaia, had studios in this large venue, for which they initially payed very little rent. In North Perth, near Hyde Park, a group of sculptors had rooms in the Norfolk Street Studios, which originally were old stables consisting of a large central area surrounded by rooms.⁷ Street Level, another studio space, was located on Beaufort Street opposite the

⁵ Pamela C. Kleeman, "Artemis, Womens' Contemporary Art Practice in WA", *Craftwest*, June 1988, p.7.

⁶ This venue is now used by Frank Danials Printing.

⁷ Conversation between the author and Ken Rasmussen, 7 May 1996.

Queens Hotel, and included artists such as Gemma Jones. There were also studios on Pier Street, in the inner city, that were used by Akio Makigawa and others from about 1979 to 1981. Stuart Elliott, Jon Tarry, Terri Lee Bird and Rosemary Dewar moved into this space in 1981 when Makigawa left for Melbourne. However, after mounting friction with another tenant, they moved into a new location in Northbridge forming the Wellman Street studios, also known as the Wowhouse.

Wellman Street

Wellman Street was established in February 1982. The artists were mainly sculptors, but painters and printmakers were also involved. The site was formerly an old laundry, or drycleaners, and the artists divided up the large communal area into separate work spaces. After their first six months of tenancy they gained access to the large adjoining warehouse which they used for exhibitions, installations and assembling large scale works. Another vacant shed, close by on Forbes Lane, was also used by artists such as Jon Tarry. The original four artists used the space until 1984 when various other projects, and travel, separated them. The population of Wellman Street was, as usual, transient and also included Peter Dailey, Laurie Smith, Shaun Wake-Mazey, Mary Knott, Linda Fardoe, Mary Dudin, Paul Waterson and many others between 1984 and 1987. Exhibitions held in the warehouse included *Roar Sharks* by Maggie Watkins, a solo exhibition by Elliott in 1986, and Tarry held an exhibition, *Open Studio*, in his Forbes Lane studio. A joint exhibition of work produced at Wellman Street by Tarry and Elliott was held at the Quentin Gallery in 1984, titled *Ziel*.

Adjacent to Wellman Street, on the other side of a car park on Stuart Street, two old semi-detached houses were also used by artists as studios during this time. They included Susan Flavell, Andrew Daly, Bryce Ritchie, Mario D'Alonzo, Stuart Green, Shaun Wake-Mazey, Fiona

Gardiner and Chris Malcolm. David Wroth and Stephen Culley, of Desert Designs, also had rooms and printed early works by Jimmy Pike in this venue. In 1987 the entire complex, including the semi-detached houses, was demolished, making way for a Vietnamese shopping centre. Peter Dailey, along with Jurek Wybraniec, David Rule and others, found new studio spaces near the corner of William and Newcastle Street, which John Greeuw was later to use as a studio in 1991. Jon Tarry and Stuart Elliott agitated for a new inner city venue, which ultimately resulted in the formation of Gotham in 1987.

The Maltings

In 1983 another studio space was developed nearby the Wellman Street studios, in the Maltings Warehouse located at 35 Stuart Road in Northbridge, previously used by a second hand furniture company. Shaun Wake-Mazey and Laurie Smith initiated the studios and were charged a minimal rent of \$25 per week. However after they were joined by Cliff Gilliam, from P3 Theatre Company, and George Blazevic, a writer/photographer, the rent increased to \$1000 per month between them. The group received no government funding or grants, and resorted to raising the rent themselves through holding large parties. These well remembered nights would include performance art, drama, theatre, light shows, psychedelic music, mural painting, local bands, and tarot readings amongst many other activities. Planning these fundraising evenings, which were held every three to four weeks, soon became draining and demoralising for the group. They were no longer able to put their energy into their own work and thus the group disbanded after a mere nine months, and moved down the road to the Wellman Street studios. On a more positive note, this learning experience aided Wake-Mazey and Smith in setting up their next studio in 1987, after the demise of Wellman Street. The resulting Giotto studios were located on William Street, in Northbridge. They were joined by

Colin Madden in this venture and remained here until circa 1991. Inspiration for the name Giotto came from the venue Rechobite Hall, formerly an old theatre. The main room was inspirational, dominated by an ornate domed and panelled ceiling.

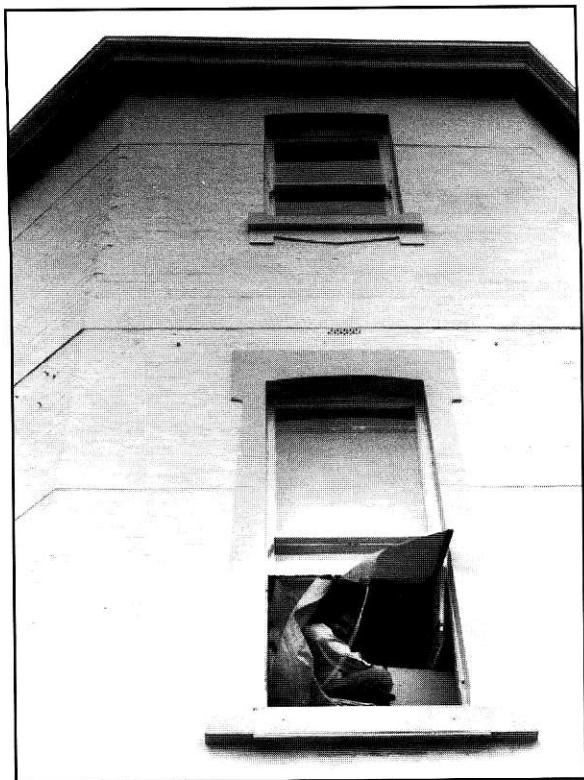
Gotham Studios

Gotham was formed in May 1987 after consultation between Jon Tarry and the Department for the Arts and the Building Management Authority. This resulted in the leasing of an old building, once bank chambers, on the corner of William and James Streets in Northbridge.⁸ Most of the Gotham studios are located on the first floor above Ophelia's Cafe and a Hare Krishna restaurant, with a few downstairs on the street level. Many of the studios are fairly small, and artists work their way into better rooms by moving into them when another artist leaves. Chris Hopewell modified the buildings interior several years ago, adding skylights and knocking out walls to make the rooms more suitable for artistic endeavour. However, as with most government owned buildings due for demolition or redevelopment, as Gotham is, the premises are run down, easily broken into and thus the rent, until recently, was quite reasonable.⁹

The location of Gotham is one of its most appealing features. It is situated in the same block as the Cultural Centre, with the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Western Australian Museum, Artshouse, and the Alexander Library Building all a short walk away. Access to public transport, as well as to the growing number of cafes and bars springing up throughout Northbridge, in addition to the shopping and central business district of Perth itself,

⁸ Ironically the upstairs rooms had been empty for many years and artists had thought of using them as studios before. Hans Arkeveld and David Hughes approached the bank with this in mind, when it was still operating.

⁹ The rent was \$1100 per month until June 1995 when the Department of Land Authority increased it 32% to \$1425.



Gotham Studios, William St., Northbridge

is also advantageous. Gotham artist Andrew Daly also believes that running their own space is a distinct advantage. They are not subjected to the whims of outside administrators, and they decide as a group who joins Gotham when a studio is vacated. Meetings are held on a monthly basis, with different artists taking turns as treasurer to collect the rent, do the banking and purchase shared merchandise. The group has no manifesto or ideology as such, but from the start agreed that they should not disturb each other, should remain self-supporting and attempt to maintain a gender balance amongst the members. They usually exhibit individually, but have exhibited as a group twice, once in *Gotham Goes Shopping* in 1990 at PICA, then again

at PICA in 1995 with *Seven Year Itch*, an exhibition commemorating seven years of Gotham.¹⁰

The Beach Gallery

The Beach Gallery was another space established in 1987 which was also run by emerging artists, with the help of a Western Australian Institute of Technology lecturer, Julian Goddard. It was initiated by Goddard along with a group of about twenty young artists, with the intention of supplying WAIT graduates with a transitional site in which to exhibit. The Beach Gallery was located upstairs at 42A Beaufort Street, conveniently opposite the Cultural Centre, and was previously used as a studio by Richard McMahon, who vacated the premises upon buying his own home.

The Beach opened in May of 1987 with a group exhibition. Exhibitors included Anna Zanella, Peter Wales, Thomas Kayser, Trevor Black, Cathy Cinanni, Darin Howard, Martin Tabor, Bridget Thornton, Robbie Jefferson, Michelle Over, Edward Horabin (Eddie Bear), John Awram, Marnie Hutchinson, Kevin Raxworthy, Richard McMahon, Andrew Strachan, Ric Vermey, Mike Starkie and Derek Tang. Other initial members were not included in this exhibition for various reasons. In August of 1987 the downstairs room at 42 Beaufort Street was cleaned and renovated by a group of artists, including some Beach Gallery members, to house their exhibition *The Believing Room : Large Scale Paintings*. From this point the Beach Gallery used both up and downstairs as exhibition spaces, usually showing two exhibitions simultaneously, with preference given to the newer downstairs area with its street frontage, large window and superior lighting. The latter was provided through a sponsorship deal with Robert Holmes à Court.

¹⁰ Please refer to the chronological listing on page 18 for a selection of the many artists that have been involved with Gotham Studio since 1987.

In 1988 Goddard encouraged the artists to form a committee to run the Gallery. The original committee, consisting of up to thirty members, met monthly at the nearby Court Hotel to organise exhibitions and fundraising events to pay the rent. With so many people involved, inevitably differences of opinions led to overall frustration. The committee shortly afterwards reduced its size to become more effective and efficient.¹¹

However by October 1988 the Beach Gallery was forced to close its doors after the sale of the building to the government, for future redevelopment. Fortunately this closure proved to be brief, and by December the Gallery had reopened after Goddard negotiated a deal with the new owners, which also included using an additional space for exhibitions next door at number 40. In the meantime, Peter Wales had moved into the upstairs area of 42A, using it as a live-in studio, as did Rick Vermey next door at number 40. Canterbury Court once again proved to be an ideal location for artists' studios, and during this period the following Beach Gallery artists had studios there: Tom Alberts, Patrizia Tonello, Gina Cinanni, Chris Fitzallen, Cathy Cinanni, Trevor Black, Susan Flavell, Janine Brody, Steven Holland, Yvette Watt and Lisa Wolframmm. As in the past in Canterbury Court Arcade, these artists did not have studios together as a co-operative, nor as a cohesive group. Yet they knew each other relatively well and would sometimes talk about their work and the direction it was taking. Working and exhibiting in the inner city often influenced their art, Tom Alberts, for example, included images from around his studio and the Cultural Centre as backdrops for several paintings in his exhibition at the Beach Gallery in June 1989. Patrizia Tonello also included the Perth skyline in some of her paintings from this period.

¹¹ This committee included Marnie Hutchinson, Peter Wales, Anna Zanella, Chris Fitzallen and Lisa Wolframmm. The Beach had many sponsors to help with rent and associated bills, including the WAIT Student Guild, Robert Holmes à Court, and Danny Low, one time owner of the building.

The Beach Gallery closed its doors in December 1989, when it, and the Canterbury Court Arcade, Canterbury Court Ballroom (a popular venue often used by local and touring bands during the 1980s), along with all of the buildings on this corner block were evacuated for demolition.¹² Today, in 1996, this area still lies vacant. Many other old buildings and warehouses which were due to be demolished were also used as artists' studios in the latter half of the 1980s. In West Perth, next to where the City West train station now stands, Rod Glick, Julie Crocket, Chris Fitzallen, Marie Haas and Trina Hopewell had studios in an abandoned warehouse. They used this space for some twelve to eighteen months, and also held drawing classes that others would attend.

Central Perth also provided many artists with cheap accommodation in flats and apartments, unfortunately demolished in the late 1980s. These included Bishops Grove, the Oddfellows Building, Arbordale, and Saint Georges Mansions, all located on St Georges Terrace, near the corner of Milligan Street. Hale Flats, also in this location, were renovated in the late 1980s and now houses a business. Several artists had live-in studio spaces in the Oddfellows Building, including Tom Alberts, Richard Gunning, Thomas Hoareau and Fiona Gardiner. Two of these artists, Alberts and Gunning, initiated a series of life drawing classes in their flat in 1983. The classes remained here for two years, providing local artists with the weekly experience of drawing from a model, something they felt was lacking from their art course at WAIT (Now Curtin University). The artists divided the model's fee between themselves each week, and the class became an important meeting point each week for the artists involved. From the Oddfellows Building the class moved to an upstairs room on Howard Street in Perth, then to a room above the Beach Gallery on Beaufort Street in 1987,

¹² The Beach Gallery relocated to Mouat Street, Fremantle, in the old wool stores, in early 1990 and stayed there until 1991 when the venue became the administration centre for the University of Notre Dame.

then finally to the Boat Shed in Crawley in 1988. Over the years many artists were involved, but the most prominent and regular were Tom Alberts, Richard Gunning, Andre Lipscombe, Fred Gilbert, Redmond Bridgeman, Yvette Watt, Sally Stoneman, Chris Malcolm, Ian Sinclair, Kate Daw, Susan Flavell, Stuart Green, Bryce Ritchie, Jon Tarry, Megan Salmon, Kevin Robertson, Christine Baker, Thomas Hoareau, Hans Arkeveld and Arthur Russell.

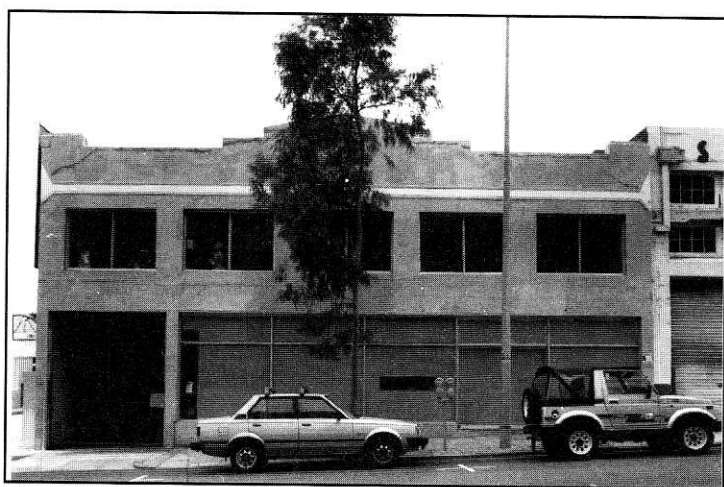
Spiral Studios

In 1992 there was another resurgence of inner city studio spaces and co-operatives. Spiral Studios were established at 418 Murray Street Perth in 1992, above Club Rumours. Founding members included Jenny Frost, Sharon Moore, Richard Birkett, Andrew Gaynor and Vanessa Lombardo, the latter acting as treasurer. Laurie Smith and Sean Wake-Mazey were also members, after the demise of Giotto, as were Julie Crockett, Walter Gomes, Louise Pinder, Michelle Eliot and Robyn Grant. The venue, unlike Gotham Studios, is not easily accessible to either the public or vagrants, which guarantees a good degree of privacy and undisturbed working conditions. The artists do not work together with common artistic aims and ideals, but rather were drawn together, as is often the case, by the mutual need to share expenses and the desire to work in close proximity to other artists rather than in isolation. Andrew Gaynor left Spiral in 1995 to return to studying, but in early 1996 became involved in another studio space on Murray Street, managing the Jacksue exhibition area of the pad. the pad (sic) is an artists' collective, currently in the process of becoming incorporated, who have studios in this spacious venue. They include Marcus Canning, Matt Stack, Michael Hender and Sohan Hanes, V. Cooper Smith and Michael Lightfoot. Once again these young artists were seeking a venue that, like The Verge and The Beach, could provide studios and their own exhibition area.

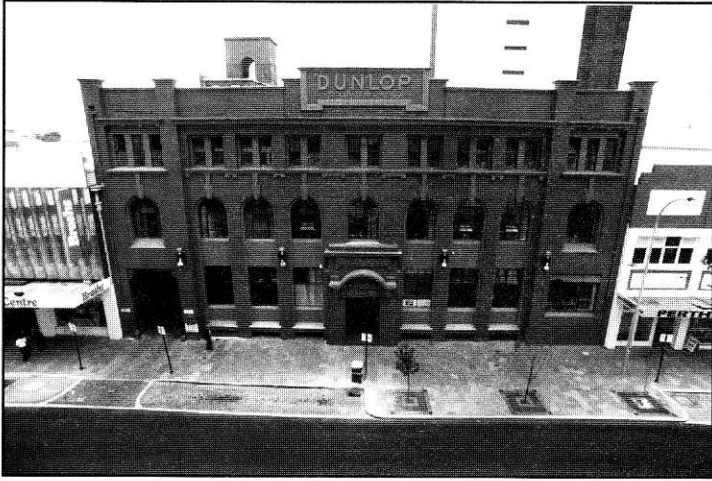
Another artist run exhibition space was the Photography Gallery of Western Australia. It formed in 1992, sharing an adjoining room with the Bridge Gallery, located at 193 William Street in Northbridge, across the road from Giotto Studio's old premises. This well situated gallery was easily accessible to patrons of other venues in and around the Cultural Centre. The Bridge Gallery shifted to the Maltings, located at 35 Stuart Street, Northbridge and previously home to the Maltings Gallery in 1983, in 1995. Here they acquired an improved space, but their new location was not as accessible to the public as the William Street address. The Photography Gallery remained at this premise until March 1996 when rent increases forced them to move into the Actors Centre within the Cultural Centre. They managed to survive without government funding or grants, relying on public donations and support, and sales from exhibitions.

The Lab

An artists' collective that also formed in 1992 found a space not quite within the inner city boundaries of this essay, but nearby in Wembley and called themselves The Lab. They faced what is becoming a com-



Jacksue Gallery & the pad studios, Murray St., Perth



Spiral Studios, Murray St., Perth

mon dilemma for many artists seeking spacious and cheap studio accommodation in or near the city: that there is very little left. They were fortunate to locate a warehouse complex at 89 Salvado Road, which they converted into studio spaces and an exhibition and performance space. The surrounding wasteland provided many of the raw materials that the artists recycled into their art works. The artists varied in ages from about nineteen to forty five years, and were mainly Curtin University graduates. They also shared the experience of being experimental artists working outside the mainstream and wishing to avoid a formal studio structure and an external authority. They first exhibited publicly in May 1995, holding a two week exhibition of sculpture, photography and performance in an enormous upstairs room in which fifteen Lab artists participated. After the closure of The Lab¹³ some of the Lab artists moved to the City Farm studios, established in January 1994 in East Perth. The studios consist of a single room warehouse divided into six work spaces. Artists currently using the space include Michelle Rieusset (a fashion designer), Paul Bennett (from the Lab) and Wendy Wise.

¹³ The Lab artists were forcibly evicted in May 1996. For more information see "Heytesbury Sends in the Heavies", *Subiaco Post*, 7 May, 1996, pp 1,5.

Another Wellman Street studio was established during this period, and was fully operational by 1993. It was named Selected Plumbers, as the studio is located behind Selected Plumbing Pty. Ltd. at 14 Wellman Street. Artists involved from 1993 to 1995 included Shaun Atkinson, Morgan Simpson, Barbara Courtile, Jason Auld and Pairaj Srisuphanraj, all Edith Cowan University graduates. They exhibited together at the Fremantle Arts Centre in January 1995, and their works clearly displayed the influence of their close association via similarities of style and themes in their largely figurative paintings and sculptures.

Story So Far...

The initiation of artist spaces continued in 1992 with studios being established at 310-312 William Street in Northbridge. John Greeuw originally rented the space in 1991 from a printer who was leasing the building but only using the downstairs area. Once the printer moved out, falling victim to the increased competition in the printing field, Greeuw took over the entire lease, in June 1992, and both lived and worked in the building. After a few months he sub-let rooms to Jenny



Giotto Studios, William St., Northbridge

Cochrane, Andrew Frost and Christine Poller. They had previously discussed the advantages of sharing a building for studio space, so seemed the natural choice for Greeuw. Once their studios were established, the four decided to work towards a group exhibition and open their space to the public. The resulting exhibition *Works* was held in March 1993.

The Verge

Jenny Cochrane, who had the area downstairs with the street frontage and large window, decided that using it as both a studio and gallery space may be a viable idea, and became the first to organise and run the space, naming it the Story So Far Gallery. Frost and Poller left their studios to work from their home in South Perth. Jenny Cochrane continued to run the Gallery and John Greeuw maintained the lease and his studio. They were joined by a new influx of artists to fill the empty rooms. With these new additions a change of administration and name was decided upon. "The Verge Incorporated" was registered in July 1994. Other foundation members included Chris Fitzallen, Lisa Wolfgramm, Kevin Draper, Jane Finlay, Sarah Dawson, Alex Spremberg and Gina Cinanni. Current studio holders at The Verge are Fitzallen, Wolfgramm, Greeuw, Dawson, Cinanni and Yvette Watt. Associate members include Finlay, Draper, Cochrane and Nick Horn.

This co-operative venture continues to provide an essential support structure with critical feedback between the artists and shared responsibilities. It also provides inexpensive studio and exhibition facilities that are relatively free from outside interference. However it, along with many other old buildings in Northbridge, Claisebrook and East Perth, will eventually be either demolished or vacated for renovations over the coming year or two, to make way for the proposed Northbridge Tunnel.