

FOUR DECADES OF MARK ARTIST-RUN WILSHER SPACES IN NORWICH

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Artists have been setting up their own galleries since the 19th century, first and foremost as a place to exhibit their own work, but also to help build a scene within which to operate and perhaps even to gain a little influence in the world. There was a boom in such spaces during the 1990s as a generation of entrepreneurial graduates known as the Young British Artists came to prominence. This is an incomplete timeline of artist-run spaces in Norwich. Please get in touch with suggestions for further inclusions or if any of the details are incorrect.

1986 - 1999

Contact Gallery

A co-op of local artists set up Contact Gallery in a shop at 56 St Benedicts St, later taking over St Margaret's Church as well. Twelve exhibitions a year were drawn mostly from a membership of 200 artists, and there were exchanges with galleries in Sheffield and Norway, usually covered by the local media. Although the main gallery eventually closed in 1999 the charity kept on running St Margaret's until 2010.

1997

7 Alexandra Mansions

Kirsty Ogg staged a series of exhibitions in her flat on the Prince of Wales Rd while working as Assistant Curator at the Norwich Gallery. Small group exhibitions mixed local artists and many then-emerging artists from Scotland including Cathy Wilkes, Simon Starling, Claire Barclay and Jim Lambie. She went on to run The Showroom in East London for ten years and was Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery from 2009-13. She is currently Director of Bloomberg New Contemporaries.

Late 1990s

Atom

Atom staged exhibitions in an empty shop unit in Anglia Square and was run by Franc Brown, who went on to set up Mota Gallery on London's Old Kent Rd in 1999. Later a technician at Wimbledon College of Art.

2001 - 2003

Frontier Gallery

This space in a shop unit at 14 Unthank Rd was set up by recently-graduated Phil Gardner to show friends and local artists including Matthew Noel Todd, Paul Kuzemczak and Rob Filby. Phil went on to work at firstsite in Colchester, as an art technician at the Hayward Gallery, and is currently working with the Arts Council Collection.

2001 - 2004

The Queen of Hungary

Stephanie Douet and Dominique Rey ran this exhibition space in a medieval hall on St Benedicts St with site-specific installations in the atmospheric basement. Shows included Graham Seaton, Gayle Chong Kwan, Sarah Horton and Jerwood Sculpture Prize winner Benedict Carpenter. Later moved to a residency-based programme at a former scout hut in Aylsham.

2001 - 2005

Context;

Julia Devonshire, Kaavous Clayton and Paul Watson ran this fanzine/portfolio of multiples in order to give emerging artists a place to share their work and help build the local artistic community. Three issues were published. One of the first manifestations of the organisation Original Projects, which currently runs exhibitions and a sound-art festival in Great Yarmouth.

2004 - ongoing

OUTPOST

This longstanding organisation has a rotating committee based on the model of Glasgow's Transmission gallery, and was initially set up with financial support from NUA's Norwich Gallery with the aim of creating a reason for graduates to stay in Norwich rather than head to London. The original committee consisted of Kaavous Clayton, Julia Devonshire, Robert Filby, Neil Smallbone, Jay Barsby, Phil Gardner and Stephanie Douet. It has staged over 150 exhibitions and off-site projects featuring many significant artists including Turner Prize winner Elizabeth Price, Bill Drummond, Jade Montserrat and Max Mara prize winner Emma Hart. Since 2009 it has also run a four-storey studio block in Gildengate House with occasional exhibitions in its project space.

2006 - 2010

Back Door Gallery

Luke Murray ran this space from his house at 87 Sprowston Rd, and later St Martins Rd, showing students and local artists including Simon Granger, Mandy Roberts and Chris Rawcliffe.

2007 - 2010

Jane Askew Gallery

Jane Askew ran this low-key gallery out of her small terraced house in Clarke Rd, showing students and local artists including Stephen Jarvis and Mark Scott Wood. She is currently Academic Registry Officer at NUA.

2011

Kiln

Kiln was loose curatorial programme set up by three BA Visual Studies students. As well as a series of talks at the Quaker Meeting House, it organised group exhibitions at Sackville Place business centre and a grand empty building on Palace St featuring students and recent graduates.

2011 - 2015

Stew

Set up in a former handbag-factory by a group of students and staff from Fine Art and Visual Studies, this was a 2000 square-foot gallery space for hire on Fishergate with studios upstairs, which hosted many group, solo and touring exhibitions during its lifetime. Also the first home of open-access print workshop Print To The People. The building has now been converted to a GPs surgery.

2011 - ongoing

Savorr

Henry Jackson Newcomb staged the first Savorr group exhibition to coincide with his degree show, and has made use of empty buildings around Norwich for another 20 exhibitions featuring over 200 local and international artists including Mark Lacey, Gillian Wearing and Flora Parrot. Domino was a month-long project at St Mary's Works in 2017. Henry would go on to co-found LOWER.GREEN and is currently curator at the Assembly House.

2012-2019

Nunn's Yard/ Yallops/ 13a

Former Antarctic engineer Tony George bought and renovated three run-down shops on St Augustine's St and began hiring them out as exhibition spaces. He also briefly set up Freight Gallery (2015-16) in Magdalen St in a large squatted unit before being evicted by the owners. It is still derelict and empty today.

2014 - ongoing

Dyad Creative

Dyad Creative is a partnership between Hannah Turner Wallis and Théodora Lecrinier curating a large range of spaces, events, performances and projects since 2014. In addition to setting up Dove St Studios and project space above Tesco in central Norwich (2014-19), they hosted over 50 artists in residence at the Barber's Shop on Magdalen St (2015-17) and exhibitions at 13a St Augustine's. Hannah is currently Curator-in-Residence at Wysing Arts Centre and Dyad Creative continues.

2018 - 19

LOWER.GREEN

Henry Jackson Newcomb took on an empty unit in Anglia Square for a year with Frieze-writer Jonathan P Watts. A programme of eight curated exhibitions included work from well-known artists, international residencies, and a historical exhibition about Gustav Metzger's time in King's Lynn.

2018 - ongoing

East Anglian Fine Art Study Centre

Consisting of a glass-topped vitrine within NUA's St Georges building, this initiative displays prints and limited editions alongside contextualising materials and ephemera, and produces occasional academic research papers on the sociology of the artworld. Artists have included Richard Wentworth, John Baldissari, Tacita Dean and Francis Alys.

2019 - ongoing

Josey

Josey is a non-profit gallery space on Willow Lane that was set up in 2019. It is currently run by Ben Brett and art critic Jonathan P. Watts. It started with an ambition to present a carefully curated programme with an emphasis on bringing international artists based outside of the UK to Norwich. The space recognises the necessity for critical discourse in contemporary art taking place outside of London. Artists exhibited include Cerith Wyn Evans, Miriam Yammad, Peter Wachtler, and Taslima Ahmed.