

IDEAS FOR PAINTERS

Repurpose empty office space in the inner cities as artist studios

- Inner city skyscrapers are the abandoned warehouse of our work-from-home era. We've got a use for them!
- Artists need large spaces over long periods of time, close to galleries, communities and major institutions.
 - Paying home rent and studio rent in a city is becoming increasingly unviable
 - Painting at home is cramped and appears unprofessional
 - Moving outside the city means less opportunities, more difficulty with logistics when exhibiting, less visibility—nothing beats being present on the ground
 - Residencies are too short to develop serious bodies of work. Rather than a project-based situation, painters need something steady and long-term, with plenty of storage.
 - Artists breathe life back into abandoned neighbourhoods; everyone else follows
 - If not artists, likely more developers will claim the spaces: meaning more uniformity, exclusivity and unaffordability.
 - Artists are not moving out of the cities. Recent research shows they continue to live inner city, but the demographic make-up of artists is changing to reflect who can *already* afford to live inner city. This means artists are quitting, or moving abroad—a huge loss for Australia either way.
- There are examples in Europe of 'temporary use' arrangements where spaces are leased for 2 or 3 year terms until they are sold or rented.
 - This is a great way to test the concept without buying up. Often these terms are extended because the arrangement suits owners too.
 - It's important to begin with a long lease so artists have some security.
 - This is a chance to expand existing programs. City councils across Australia offer spaces but not nearly enough to keep up with demand. Assessment processes etc are already in place.
 - Smaller independent collectives across Australia have negotiated warehouse spaces with the modest goal of 'holding out as long as possible.' Recently, some of these have folded. These initiatives need government support against developers—and governments can benefit from the years of expertise of individuals and collectives already doing this work.

(The 'cost of living' crisis is a housing crisis, and a housing crisis is a cultural crisis: with artists devoting most of their time and energy to paying rents in increasingly unaffordable cities, we all lose out on work that never gets made.)

A professional visual artist in Australia on average devotes only 23 hours a week to their practice. Distracted artists make distracted work.)

Reform art prizes

- Australian painting seems to run on art prizes: they generate the most opportunities for painters, who are ill-represented on funding panels and thus in public funding.
- Painters should not be taxed on winnings: a single \$40,000 win could buy time to paint for two years, except for being swallowed up in taxes because it came all at once.
- Prize organisers should absorb more of the burden of costs:
 - Paying finalists a fee to use their work (especially if the show generates ticket sales)
 - Paying finalists a licensing fee to reproduce their work, as in any other field
 - Covering shipping and insurance.
 - Artists currently pay for all expenses (materials, framing, shipping, insurance) plus an entry fee (standard: \$50) plus 30-50% commission if the work sells.

(The problem at the core of art prizes is the zero-sum arrangement that pitches us against each other: there is only one winner, and the rest of us make an actual loss. Instead, we could all be raising each other up as a collective.

If prizes collapsed under these conditions, it would show that the model is unsustainable.)