

Chapter 3

Dundee Contemporary Arts Print Studio

ABSTRACT

The Print Studio is part of Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA), an organization located in the downtown area near the River Tay on the East Coast of Scotland. The print studio evolved from a number of different art collectives beginning in the 1970s. They were located in the city and provided facilities and equipment for artists to develop their skills. Recognizing that the arts could revitalize a city devastated by a vacuum left by a shift in their industrial base, the city funded the building of a modern arts center with cinemas, a print studio, and large exhibition galleries for world-renowned artists to display their work. Additional funding allowed the print studio at DCA to purchase digital fabrication machinery to investigate the interface of mechanical and digital making processes: in particular, studying how traditional processes can be enhanced with contemporary technology to revitalize and preserve the antique. This chapter explores the Dundee Contemporary Arts Print Studio.

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Learning communities happen - just naturally here really, because you've got people coming into the studio all the time with similar interests. It's a very public space. In one way that is a bit off-putting as everybody can see what you're doing so they get to see your mistakes, as well as your successes. There's an atmosphere here where people won't interfere unless you ask them but then people do start chatting about their work. We have a small kitchen area where people congregate and have informal chats. It happens in that unstructured way; people being in the same space chatting about their work. — Annis Fitzhugh

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

The Print Studio, which is located within the Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) building, was established in 1999 as an open space for novices, professional artists and makers to come together and create projects in unexpected ways. Located in Dundee, Scotland, by the river Tay, DCA is a world-renowned center for arts and culture boasting two art galleries, two movie theaters, a family learning space, a print studio, and a bar and restaurant all in one building. DCA is funded through Creative Scotland and the Dundee City Council, which owns the DCA building, as well as public user fees and other revolving income streams.

The author interviewed and toured the space with Annis Fitzhugh, Head of Print Studio, and Sarah Derrick, Head of Learning at DCA. According to Fitzhugh, Dundee's stature in the international art scene was not always as high as it is presently. Dundee was a working-class city with industries like shipbuilding and jute mills. As many as 50,000 workers were employed in over 100 jute mills in Dundee during the period from 1841 to 1901 (FDCA, n.d.). Aside from the wealthy 'barons' who profited from the jute business, many of the workers in Dundee lived in poverty and overcrowded conditions while working in the mills. Once the jute and shipbuilding industries collapsed the city was left struggling. The slow collapse of the industrial base concluded in the 1990s, which was about the time DCA was proposed.

Dundee and the surrounding towns have a population base of about 300,000 and at the time was, "Very much in a bad place, really, as a city, struggling. And since then even more industries have left." Many people thought that locating DCA in Dundee was a mistake because of its history and overall status, around 1999. But as Fitzhugh pointed out, the city council believed that the arts center could reinvigorate the city and economy. The goal of the

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