Good garrets getting harder to find. "A Space of One's Own: The Studio Dilemma in Toronto," "City slides into cultural crisis as the rich chase the Dream." "Skyrocketing costs of downtown life make city artists endangered species." "Artist's colonies going the way of Fleshterons." "Studio squeeze Play." "Exodus of artists feared in face of housing crisis." "Metro's real estate boom paints artist into a corner." "Must art be rewarded with poverty?" "City paints grim picture for artists." "Consultant's report predicts Toronto will lose more artists if affordable space isn't found." This selection of headlines, dating from September 1985 to April 1990, sums up a half-decade's mounting cultural crisis—one that exactly parallels the larger affordable housing shortage that challenges our major cities and towns.

Building Arcadia

Canada's First Co-operative Housing for Artists

A scan through the clippings-files over the period of the above-quoted articles would reveal a few instances of grassroots activism in pursuit of local solutions to this global crisis. The same papers that reported the bad news about the "studio dilemma" and the artists' despair also ran such more concrete stories as the 2 February 1985 feature titled "Room for a Rembrandt! Harbourfront co-op designed to meet artists' needs," and the 28 June 1986 item headlined, "Co-op for artists is nest of creativity by the lake." The articles chronicled the unlikely conception, lengthy gestation and difficult birth of Arcadia Co-operative Inc., on Bathurst Quay, the section of the 37.2-hectare (92-acre) Harbourfront complex set aside for "social housing.

Arcadia consists of 150 units housing some 162 adults (i.e., voting members), 45 children, and a dozen or so registered and unregistered guests. The site of the members' meeting is to employ a full-time staff consisting of an office manager, assistant manager," bookkeeper, and maintenance workers. Units are broken down into the following categories: 18 one-bedroom, 48 two-bedroom, 33 three-bedroom, and 30 four-bedroom. Thirty-two of the units (one or two-bedroom only), on the north side of the building, boast 6.7-metre/22-foot-high ceilings and are intended for use by visual artists. As of August 1990, housing charges will vary from $650 per month for a one-bedroom apartment, to $1,225, for a four-bedroom unit (at the unsubsidized rate).

Acknowledging that few artists can afford even a modest down-payment, and acting in accordance with the criteria of the cooperative movement that "housing is for people, not for profit," Arcadia's founders opted for a model of joint, non-equity tenure that would ensure that neither the building, nor the individual units would be susceptible to "flipping" by speculators or gentrification by yuppie brokers, but would remain in the possession of the community in perpetuity.

Arcadia was built under a federal social housing program—the so-called "56:1 Agreement"—that unfortunately...
BY ROBERT STACEY

is no longer available for the development of co-op units. The co-op corporation, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp., insured the co-op's 35-year, low-interest mortgage, which meant that no down payment was required. It also gave an interest-reduction grant to the co-op, and provided staff at no cost, which allowed it to pay its development and member services consultant.

Two basic steps were needed to pay construction costs of $7.5 million and to secure a 60-year land lease. Once the mortgage is paid off, the co-op can allocate extra funds for the construction of the building.

The terms of its agreement with CDA provide the co-op with both an annually shrinking bridge subsidy, which covers the gap between the market housing charges and the development costs, and an annually increasing monthly lump sum forming a subsidy pool. Some 75 or nearly one-half of Arcadia's members may be called "grassroots." This is, that is, their housing charges are subsidized to cover the difference between the actual rent and the 25% of their annual income that is considered to be the minimum that anyone should have to pay in rent. Thus, for an $800-per-month unit, a person on subsidy who makes $10,000 a year would pay $450, 25% of $375 monthly, the difference being made up by a draw from the subsidy pool. Arcadia successfully fought CDA's policy of setting housing charges that reflect local market levels on the co-op's case, thus being a bastion of grassroots solidarity, arguing that rents should be comparable to assisted housing in more affordable areas.

However, the co-op's ability to vote on its own rates and, according to expenditures, rather than the profit motive, means that charges which originally seemed high become more and more reasonable.

At the time of initial occupancy, units were allocated on a first-come, first-served basis, with the monthly subsidy allocation spread as widely as possible. About 75% of the households that initially took occupancy received rent-guided-income assistance. Only as the income of these households rises will the demand on the subsidy pool allow the admission of new members in need of housing-income assistance. As of May 1980, some 70 names on the active waiting list—founder of the community and past president of the building, Arnold Schwartz, and今后．
Building Arcadia

Arcadia was conceived as a model co-operative housing complex where social and environmental concerns were integrated into the design. The project was a joint effort between architects and community members, with the goal of creating a sustainable and inclusive living environment. The design focused on the creation of multi-use spaces, including a community centre, a daycare, and commercial spaces, all integrated into a mixed-use development. The project aimed to provide affordable housing options and promote a sense of community among the residents.

The architectural design was intended to be flexible and adaptable, allowing for ongoing changes and updates to the space. The project included the renovation of a historic building, which was repurposed to accommodate the new housing and community facilities. The use of sustainable building materials and energy-efficient design principles were incorporated into the project, making it a model for green building practices.

The residents of Arcadia were actively involved in the planning and decision-making process, which helped to ensure that the project met their needs and aspirations. The community centre was designed to be a space for social activities and gatherings, while the daycare contributed to the work-life balance of parents and caregivers.

The project was completed in 2016, and it continues to be a source of inspiration for other co-operative housing projects. The integration of social and environmental concerns into the design process has set a new standard for sustainable and inclusive community development.

Exhibits:

Artists' Housing in Toronto: from Displacement to Replacement

The lack of housing constitutes a personal crisis for many affected, but artists also face other problems. Artists, because of the nature of their independent production, often need to supply their own workshops, studios, and rehearsal spaces. Thus, when a working artist can't find a reasonable price, they are forced to move or to leave. It affects every aspect of his or her life.

The issue of housing in Toronto is, of course, part of the greater social-economic crisis within the downtown core, which has seen the displacement of long-time residents over the past ten years. Artists are as much affected by the housing crisis as all others who are economically and politically marginalized: single mothers, pensioners, ex-nymphetics, patients, refugees, the unemployed, and the working poor. However, they experience their displacement in a different manner from these other disadvantaged groups. It is directly related to their work, and consequently to their self-definition.

The arts community is, in practice, a series of almost autonomous groupings, loosely constructed around particular media, aesthetic codes, shared histories, and personal and social friendships. Within the inner metropolitan core, the community is defined by the conditions of working and being in a geographic area, and as simple as recognizing others fellow artists and being acknowledged in return. Artists' commitment to a neighbourhood is a practical need to be close to certain cultural amenities—art supplies, cultural facilities, neighbourhood shops, a sociably tolerant environment. But equally important is a commitment to the idea of the 20th-century urban metropolis: the city itself.

The urban arts' local geography of the city tends to revolve around three major elements: 1) the points of production (the studio, the rehearsal hall, the editing room, etc.); 2) the public outlets or distribution points (galleries, theatres, music halls, bookstores); 3) the social venues (bars, coffee shops, restaurants). Especially for visual artists, the most essential is the location where work is produced. Inside the studio.

The importance of a place—both physical and psychological—on which to work and develop projects can't be over-emphasized. What the vast majority of artists share is their low level of income. There are, by recent count, an estimated 1,733 people working in the arts in Toronto. After expenses, their average income from all sources—day jobs, night jobs and sales of work—is $12,544. The average income directly from art production is $1,561. Therefore, the economic reality of working in the arts is that it is a very poor paid work. And artists of work; they produce objects and images; they express themselves through words, pictures, sounds, movement. As well as in particular aesthetic and ideological terms, the making of art both is and builds a social fabric. It is part of the larger urban economy as a service industry and a cultural industry—although obviously it's "industrial" employment that only pays $1,500 a year by definition outside the mainstream economy.

The issue of artists' housing and work-space needs has been around for years, but it wasn't until the mid-1980s, with the heightened real-estate boom in Toronto, that artists began to be displaced in large numbers. It was a long time for the art world to catch on. The real estate boom that enveloped the city in the 1970s and 80s, and the resultant gentrification, made the art world's work-space in the downtown core unaffordable. At this point, the artists had to find new work-spaces. In the end, they were forced to seek out other areas of the city, often on the outskirts of the downtown core.

The artists' work-space of the mid-1800s, individual artists, and small groups started to experience a wave of early development in many parts of Toronto. The rapid development of the downtown core in the early 20th century, and the resultant gentrification and a shortage of urban areas in cities, was forcing more and more artists to leave the city for the suburbs and exurbs. The more recent development of the Toronto waterfront and harbour areas, and the displacement of the so-called Curtain theatre, has also been characterized by the usual mediocrity—planning, reinforcing the city's worst problems. The city's assets, the Daydream, has interned the pressures in the urban core, eliminating massive traffic congestion, inadequate parking, overcrowded public transit. These are predictable results of uncontrolled speculation and development.

Like so many of its North American counterparts, Toronto has also been experiencing the more general process of gentrification, with the return from the suburbs to the downtown of the middle-class and the iteration of the suburbs to the downtowns. The situation is no different in the downtown core. Artists have no choice but to seek out other work-spaces. In the end, they were forced to seek out other areas of the city, often on the outskirts of the downtown core.

By the mid-1980s, individual artists, and small groups started to experience a wave of early development in many parts of Toronto. The rapid development of the downtown core in the early 20th century, and the resultant gentrification and a shortage of urban areas in cities, was forcing more and more artists to leave the city for the suburbs and exurbs. The more recent development of the Toronto waterfront and harbour areas, and the displacement of the so-called Curtain theatre, has also been characterized by the usual mediocrity—planning, reinforcing the city's worst problems. The city's assets, the Daydream, has interned the pressures in the urban core, eliminating massive traffic congestion, inadequate parking, overcrowded public transit. These are predictable results of uncontrolled speculation and development.

Like so many of its North American counterparts, Toronto has also been experiencing the more general process of gentrification, with the return from the suburbs to the downtown of the middle-class and the iteration of the suburbs to the downtowns. The situation is no different in the downtown core. Artists have no choice but to seek out other work-spaces. In the end, they were forced to seek out other areas of the city, often on the outskirts of the downtown core.
Artists' Housing in Toronto

Artists need the "rightful" equality which keeps them affordable.

Artists need to be able to work and live in the city. They need to have access to the same facilities as other residents. They need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need support from the government. They need support from the city. They need support from the community. They need support from the arts community. They need support from the arts organizations. They need support from the arts funders. They need support from the arts councils.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.

Artists need to be able to afford to live in the city. They need to be able to afford to work in the city. They need to be able to afford to create art in the city.
Artists are a mirror of our times; they are an essential element of a healthy community. Unfortunately, the contribution made to the city by its artist citizens tends to be taken for granted, only being "noticed" when it is missed.

Politicians, bureaucrats, business leaders and the taxing public all profit from the various forms of art that enrich us all, but find the many benefits conferred on our society by artists too abstract for consideration except on monetary terms. Only when confronted by the real loss of revenue, prestige and quality-of-life that a wholesale departure of artists from our urban islands do they sit up and take notice of the dilemma facing the victims of the increasing shortage of affordable work/space in the downtown core. Some recent facts and figures are thus in order:

In 1984, compared to all Canadian manufacturing industries, the arts industry ranked as the country's largest with respect to employment (141,000 workers, or 4% of the Canadian labour force in 1981), 5th largest with respect to salaries and wages, and 9th largest with respect to revenues (totaling $1.3 billion, or 2% of the GNP).

As an average throughout the 1980s, among the 29 largest Canadian manufacturing industries the arts industry ranked 11th in revenues ($7 billion per annum), and 6th in salaries and wages ($1.3 billion p.a.).

During the period 1983-87, the total arts and culture community grew on average about 10% per year, as measured in 1981 constant dollars of revenue, increasing its revenues from $7.2 million to $120 million (1981 dollars), or about $150 million in 1987 actual dollars.

The dollar amount of revenue generated in Toronto directly and indirectly by the arts (1990 estimate): $174 million.

Total employment in the arts and arts-related fields in Toronto (1983): 125,000.

The fact that the actual number of artists of all disciplines and media in greater Toronto is nearly 20,000, and that, of 300 members of the profession surveyed in 1989 for the City of Toronto Housing Department's recently published report on artists' and artisans' work/space needs, fully two-thirds were able to mention at least one artist whom they knew personally who had moved out of the city within the past year because of work/space problems, indicates the magnitude of the problem and its implications for the economic as well as the spiritual wellbeing of Toronto.

In light of the forced evictions of so many of their number over the last few years, it's important to remember that artists have always been an integral part of the larger Toronto populace. They live and work in the city, raising children, earning money, paying taxes, pursuing goals and dreams—just like everyone else. By juggling around these variances, ordering them accordingly to our personal priorities, each of us creates a unique life. Often, the relative position of, or value placed on, these individual elements will make us very different from one another, and in these differences that create the art and textures whose sum is a community, a city—Toronto.

While these choices play a major role for most of us in structuring our lives, we also must recognize that there are some elements of community life that are not choices but rights, such as justice, safety, and equality. In spite of our individual differences, it is our responsibility, as members of the body politic, to make sure that these rights are assured to all.

Housing is another such right.

Over the last ten years, the lack of affordable living space has become a major issue in all but the wealthiest sectors of Toronto. Nowhere has this been more acute than in the downtown core, where most artists prefer to live and work.

In 1984 the Toronto Arts Council commissioned a study to evaluate the actual effect that high rents and exorbitant real-estate prices were having on the arts community. The title of the resulting report, "No Vacancy," speaks for itself.

Several aspects were documented in the study: First, a 50% to 60% decrease in downtown residents' incomes, artists were being squeezed out of the steadily increasing rents. Many artists who had come to the city to make a living, or to feel the pulse, were finding that two things happened: one, artists left Toronto or, as has happened so often in the past, both here and in major cultural centers around the world. They moved into affordable, sun-down in neighborhoods; where, through their own efforts and resources, they carved out a lifestyle and income space.

Secondly, we wrote that "artists are the storm-toppers of gentrification!" By 1984 this phenomenon was already well-established in Toronto. No sooner had artists applied their creativity and energy to areas such as Yorkville and Queen Street West, creating interesting neighborhoods with eclectic mixtures of restaurants and shops, than others wanted to be there too—others who could and would pay more. Rents, predictably, went up, and the artists were forced to move in search of another affordable space. A (more or less) similar phenomenon was occurring in a (more or less) similar way in the western end of the city—"Wychwood Park." The "mixed-use" concept in 1984, in response to the "no vacancy" report, "to make housing available to artists at all income levels," has been "a substitute for a long-term strategic plan to address what has become a widespread trend: the steady influx of the artistic population of the city because of high rents, low vacancies, and the conversion of artist's living and workspaces into studios and performance and rehearsal spaces for the commercial and entertainment community..."
Toronto Artscape Inc.

Julie Garbutt

Toronto Artscape Inc. was launched in 1990 to bring together a group of artists, architects, and community leaders to create a new arts facility in Toronto's downtown. The project was supported by the federal and provincial governments, as well as the City of Toronto.

The Artscape building, located at 8 St. James's Avenue, opened in 1993 and was designed by architect Michael Green. It houses a variety of cultural organizations, including the National Ballet of Canada, the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and the Toronto International Film Festival.

The building's design is unique, featuring a central atrium with an outdoor courtyard and a rooftop garden. It has been recognized for its architectural excellence and sustainability, receiving numerous awards and accolades.

Today, Artscape continues to be a cultural hub, offering a range of programs and activities that promote creativity, community engagement, and social cohesion.

---

Billie Bridges

Artistic Director, Toronto Artscape Inc.