

WCMT Fellowship Report – Tim Boyd

Craft & design workshop research trip, Australia – August - September 2022

Introduction

Over the course of 15 days, I travelled from Auckland to Sydney, through to Melbourne and finishing in Adelaide to conduct research and make connections to assist with a project based in Tāmaki Makaurau. The aim was to learn from leading creative spaces that focus on providing physical space for makers with a focus on craft and design.

Over the last 5 years I have been running [The Warren](#), a shared wood workshop that provides access to high quality machinery, educates users in the operation of said machinery and offers space for makers to reside. Through public consultation the requirement for such space is in high demand, and not solely for woodwork. A multidisciplinary space would immensely benefit the local maker community.

The biggest hurdle to overcome is how to build a sustainable financial model that ensures the makers and the space flourish. This was my primary objective of the research trip.

Supplementary to this, getting to the core of what made a project successful, what set them apart and key success factors that we can learn from to ensure we can produce a success story.

Another area I wanted to research was the effects such a space had on makers, the wider craft community, and the public at large.

Background

Before commencing my travels to Australia, I undertook a self-funded research trip around New Zealand to learn from spaces that shared some similar visions. I visited XCHC in Christchurch, The Centre for Fine Woodwork in Nelson, Hackland and The Shed in Tāmaki Makaurau. I also had conversations with community workshops in Wellington, Tauranga, Wanaka, and Queenstown.

On top of this, I've also been in communication with spaces in London to complement my learnings. Cockpit Studios stands out as the pinnacle in what we could become. Via a 2-hour self-funded video conference with their business development manager I was able to break down their model and grasp what it took to operate such a space.

My takings from this research affirmed the large demand for shared creative space. As land has become a premium, people are less likely to have an area they can dedicate to a craft, let alone the financial backing to set up and run a fully-fledged workshop.

Another theme that ran strong was the environmental and financial sustainability of sharing resources.

Community was mentioned time and again as a driving force that brought people together. For some it was the social aspect of community, for others it was sharing skills and knowledge, and some people like the accountability working alongside their peers brought to their practice.

I believe that we can create a more vibrant, inclusive, and more sustainable maker community in Tāmaki Makaurau through shared space, shared resources, shared skills and knowledge.

Key Learnings

Sydney

[Woodburn Creatives](#) – Private business - Nathan Kaw – Business owner

- Private business allows for nimble decision making
- Operates less as a business model and more a real-estate equation – Active vs. passive
- All revenue generated from leasing space to tenants
- Actively keeps operating costs as low as possible; other than kitchen and bathroom facilities, tenants provided everything they needed to run their practices
- Visual artists, graphic designers, fashion designers, video production, milliner and props maker made up the tenancies
- The scarcity of similar spaces has been fundamental to its success
- Avoid implementing too many barriers to people creativity
- Residents love being part of the space as it not only fulfils their work life, but also their social life. Allowing for an easy work life balance in a big city.

[Makerspace & Co](#) – Not for Profit - Nadine Sharpe & Chris Moulder – Facilities managers

4 years ago, I visited Makerspace & Co and spoke with the facilities manager at the time Kris Spann.

- Financial model relied on 50% from course, 20% from tenants, 20% memberships, 10% funding/grants/other
- Discussed charity vs private business. They said it would not be possible to operate their model without the funding and benefits of being a charitable entity.
- 33 studios rented in total
- A lot of their machinery was obtained from companies who are writing off assets
- Struggled with keeping the space tidy with the volume of users using the workshops

Melbourne

[Collingwood Yards](#) – Not for Profit - Sophie Travers, CEO & Rob Mackay Clift, Facilities Manager

Collingwood Yards was a standout example of what can be achieved with good public/private partnership. It is extremely well managed and a very impressive facility that is helping to solve the crisis of affordable arts space.

- Council owned facility – Previously a TAFE. Managed by Contemporary Arts Precinct Limited a charitable social enterprise. Operates with a staff of 7
- Through public and private fundraising, they raised over \$15 million to upgrade and bring up to code for a public space
- Council does not charge for the lease

- Revenue is generated through leasing space to arts aligned businesses, charities and not for profits. Studio spaces are also leases to makers
- A couple of spaces are reserved for scholarships. These are funded through partnerships with a local bank
- Actively targeted tenants they felt would benefit the community
- Including first people area core value – Sitting on the board and hold space
- They set the guidelines for how to operate within the space, but allow the space for businesses, makers and organisations to guide their own path
- 52 studios for rent with 3 fully funded
- One business leases a large space and breaks up the space to make for cheap spaces to allow up and coming artist a springboard
- Public facing businesses: book store, coffee shop, bar, home wares, ceramics, gallery all paying commercial rent
- Private businesses leasing space include architecture firms, design companies, Ableton Live, events companies, radio station

NORM – Not for Profit - Sam & Jasper – Facilities managers

NORM has had very organic growth to be where it is today. Started out 9 years ago to serve the DIY maker who lacks a garage. Has transitioned more into a woodwork studio because they chanced across good, cheap woodwork machinery.

- Mostly voluntary run with one position paid. This position is split by Sam and Jasper
- Not for profit charity that relies on studio rental, memberships, and funding/grants
- Small businesses are starting to take over the space. This is a blessing and a curse. They keep the space open financially but do take over the space.
- 21 studios for lease which cover all overheads and make a small surplus
- Council funding has been central to their success
- They do not aspire to grow any bigger and are content serving their current community
- Located out of central Melbourne. Rent is cheap
- Very close to public transport link via bus and train

Adelaide

The Mill – Not for Profit - Tim Watts, CEO

A really inspiring space that provides affordable space to 50 creatives and small businesses.

- Charitable entity renting from private landlord
- Revenue is generated via rental of space. 16 open studios, 6 private studios, 6 private offices, meeting room hire, events space hire, theatre hire
- \$30k/year from philanthropic backers. Aiming to increase this to \$300k/year
- Funding from local banks for specific shows and events
- Two full time positions to manage space. Previously both positions were done by Tim for the last 5 years and recently the job split into two titles, general manager, and venue manager. Allows Tim to work on growing the space, while the day to day is taken care of.
- Actively working on expanding the space. A large fundraising program is currently in the works

The Jam Factory – Not for Profit - Brian Parker, CEO & Andrew Carvolth, Head of Furniture

The Jam Factory was the space that I was most excited to visit. They are well established, produce world class talent and have an interesting funding model.

- Charitable entity homed in a council owned asset. Purpose built space with commercial grade workshops and studio spaces
- Staffed by a team of 40 paid positions
- Associate program in the fields of metalwork, woodwork, ceramics, glass and jewellery
- JAM has in house designed products that are made by associates and sold in the onsite store
- Onsite galleries to showcase associates work
- Relies on state and central government funding, but is constantly working towards being self reliant
- Large growth area is education. Purpose built woodwork education facility is now in full swing
- JAM has a halo effect on the maker community of Adelaide. It actively works to support aligned businesses and charities.
- If you want to rely on a store for revenue, then you need to be based centrally or have a high-street outlet.
- Critical to be a not for profit to operate

[Mixed Goods Studio](#) – Private business - Andrew Carvolth & Dean Toepfer – Business owner

Mixed Goods Studio was born from the collaboration of Andrew and Dean, who are both alumni of The Jam Factory. Andrew and Dean are both still associated with The Jam Factory.

- Privately funded by Andrew and Dean
- They do not get paid for their rolls, but their businesses get the advantages of being part of the collective space
- Quite a few of the other lessees are also Jam Factory alumni
- Actively work on fostering community through events, end of week drinks, exhibitions, studio days
- Designed a versatile space that allows for storage areas to quickly be changed into events spaces
- 10 spaces for lease – Contributes to 100% of outgoings
- Space hosts woodworks, metal works, visual artists, object artist & jeweller

[BlankSpace](#) – Private business - Adam Camporeale – Business owner

I used BlankSpace as a base while I was in Adelaide. From here, I spent the time I was not out looking at spaces to write up notes and work on developing the business model and plan for The Warren.

I also conducted an interview with Adam, the founder of BlankSpace to understand what challenges they have encountered towards their journey of success.

Although not quite the type of space I was researching, Adam provided some interesting insights to subleasing space.

- Originally allowed any type of creative. Now honed down to mostly businesses operating in the video production, marketing and communication field. There was one desk leased to a visual artist.

- Most businesses lease 4-6m2 of space. Considerably less space than the average maker. This is why the average coworking lease model does not work well for a craft based coworking space.
- All costs met through subletting of space. Adam is not paid to manage the space, but his business gets the collective benefit of operating from a shared space
- Very well located in central Adelaide. This has been central to the success of the space
- Adam has always been open to change, this has allowed the business to morph when required. This was crucial to its survival through COVID.

[Lachlan Park](#) – Newstead, Victoria - Woodworker

Lachlan is a friend and student of [John Shaw](#), the founder of [The Center for Fine Woodworking](#) and tutor at The Warren. I split the drive between Melbourne and Adelaide with a night staying with Lachlan and his family. Lachlan is a highly skilled woodworker and teacher. We spent the evening discussing the importance of having access to space to allow the passing of skills and knowledge. He currently teaches from his small workshop at the back of his parents' property.

Conclusions

Having the opportunity to travel to Australia made it possible to expand my thinking, make new connections and gave me the space to develop a business model to transition our existing space into a financially sustainable shared workshop to support 60 makers in their creative endeavours. This model focuses on 80% of revenue coming through studio rental, with the remaining revenue being generated through education programs, space hire for events, commission from sales of products and a small amount of fundraising.

We have recently submitted a very strong proposal to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage for large project funding to make this transition, without the learnings of this fellowship I would not be as confident with this submission.

Our application for charitable status has also been submitted, as this stood out as an obvious learning from my travel and a step to ensure longevity of the project. An overwhelming majority of the projects that we visited operated as a charitable entity. This gave them increased access to funding, tax advantages and improved public confidence in the project.

In all a very positive experience, and one that I am very grateful I had the opportunity to partake in.

Dissemination

All my research has gone directly towards assisting in the evolution of The Warren to achieve our goals of becoming a hub and a home to the craft and design community of Tāmaki Makaurau. It has helped to solidify our vision, sculpt our business model, and inspired us at difficult times.

There is currently a large contestable fund available through The Ministry for Culture and Heritage. The learnings and connections made have been vital in submitting a solid application, which if successful will directly improve the lives of 60+ makers and the wider public.

More informally the knowledge gained over this research trip has been passed onto similar spaces around NZ through continued conversations with the founders and managers. The community is very open with the sharing of resources and knowledge as it is based on the backbone of sharing and community.

Itinerary

Date	Place	Space/Person
Friday Aug 26th	Arrive Sydney 10.30am	
Saturday Aug 27th	Sydney	Makerspace & Co 10am
Sunday Aug 28th	Sydney	
Monday Aug 29th	Sydney	Woodburn Collective - 10am
Tuesday Aug 30th	Fly to Melbourne 11.50am	
Wednesday Aug 31st	Melbourne	
Thursday Sep 1st	Melbourne	Collingwood Yards 10am
Friday Sep 2nd	Melbourne	NORM - 3-5pm
Saturday Sep 3rd	Drive to Adelaide	Lachlan Park – Visit workshop
Sunday Sep 4th	Drive to Adelaide	
Monday Sep 5th	Adelaide	The Mill - 12.30pm/ BlankSpace
Tuesday Sep 6th	Adelaide	Jam Factory - 10.30am/ BlankSpace
Wednesday Sep 7th	Adelaide	BlankSpace
Thursday Sep 8th	Adelaide	BlankSpace – Interview with Adam
Friday Sep 9th	Adelaide	Mixed Goods Studios/ BlankSpace
Saturday Sep 10th	Fly to Auckland 11.55am	