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FEATURES

TRANSFORMING DC'S ARTISTIC LANDSCAPE: HAMILTONIAN ARTISTS' VISIONARY NEW STUDIOS AT 14TH & U STREETS NW

By [Phil Hutinet](#) on October 17, 2023



View of studios from hallway. Photo by Vivian Marie Doering. Courtesy Hamiltonian Artists.

In the bustling heart of Washington, DC's U Street neighborhood, a transformation is underway. It's a transformation that promises to redefine the way artists work, collaborate, and thrive in the nation's capital. This transformation is embodied in Hamiltonian Artists' new artist studios, a visionary project that seeks to not only provide much-needed workspace but to foster a sense of community and artistic growth in the city.

As I stepped into the Hamiltonian Artists' gallery, I was greeted by Lily Siegel, the Executive Director of Hamiltonian Artists, who would serve as my guide for the day. We embarked on a studio tour that aimed to reveal the details and aspirations behind this promising new project.

A Space of Creative Flow and Connectivity

Two entrances will connect the artist studio space—one directly off the street and the other through the gallery. Siegel explained that these two entrances are designed to encourage a sense of flow and continuity between the gallery and the studio, allowing flexibility to open up the studios during exhibitions or other gallery events. It's not just about workspace; it's about creating a space for artists and collectors to gather, converse, and create vibrant artistic dialogue.

As Siegel and I made our way up the back staircase to the second floor, she pointed out the conference room, designated for meetings and discussions. Just down the hall from the conference room, a comfortable nook is being set up as a lounge area, complete with sofas and chairs. Plans are in place to establish a library in this space, featuring a collection of art and design books from various publishers. This library will serve as a valuable resource, offering artists a rich source of inspiration and knowledge.

The Heart of the Studios: Creative Spaces for Artists

But the highlight of this artistic haven is undoubtedly the studios themselves. There are five in all, and each studio is unique; they are all thoughtfully designed for artists. They are generously sized, offering artists ample room to unleash their creativity. Averaging around 250 square feet, they open onto a main hall and are sealed using a rolling barn door. Two of the studios have natural light; three of the others do not. Of the studios with natural light, one has a skylight, and the other faces bustling U Street. The subfloor is exposed but is stained honey-orange, adding a pleasing touch while remaining practical as artists can spill paint or other materials without worry. Each studio is equipped with an exhaust fan to ventilate paint or solvents.

Accessibility and Flexibility for All Artists

The burning question on everyone's mind is, of course, the cost. Siegel explained that Hamiltonian Artists is committed to making these studios accessible to all artists, regardless of their financial circumstances. While they are highly subsidized, there's also a second-tier price for those who need additional support. The focus is on providing artists with what they need to thrive, and the discussion of rent comes after the selection process.

One of the unique aspects of these studios is the flexibility offered through lease lengths. Artists can choose lease periods ranging from three months to a year, allowing them to tailor their experience to their needs. The idea is to keep the spaces dynamic, constantly evolving, and responsive to the changing needs of DC's artist community.

A Commitment to Professional Development and Artistic Growth

Beyond the practicalities, the project is deeply rooted in Hamiltonian Artists' mission to support artists in their professional development. As a professional development program, Hamiltonian Artists sees itself as part of a larger ecosystem that includes collectors, spaces to work, and artists themselves. By offering these studios, Hamiltonian Artists is filling a crucial gap in the DC ecosystem, providing artists with the vital space they need to create, experiment, and thrive.

The residency approach taken by Hamiltonian Artists allows artists to use the studios for projects, competitions, or studio visits. It's not about locking artists into a permanent space; it's about providing a flexible environment that can adapt to their needs. Whether someone is an emerging artist or an established one, these studios are designed to support their journey.

Inclusivity and Community Building

What's particularly exciting is Hamiltonian Artists' commitment to the broader artistic community. The studios won't be reserved solely for Hamiltonian fellows; instead, they aim to open these spaces to artists from various backgrounds. This inclusivity aligns with the organization's desire to foster connections, expose artists to different communities, and facilitate artistic growth.

Furthermore, the location of these studios is strategic. Situated in the center of DC, they are poised to attract curators, gallery owners, patrons, and others who can act as stewards of an artist's career. The studios become not just a place to work but a launchpad for artists to share their work with a broader audience.

Pioneering a Model for Arts Support

While Hamiltonian Artists has created a new studio space, it is also pioneering a model that can be replicated and adapted elsewhere. It demonstrates that partnerships between donors, contractors, and developers can be harnessed to support the arts. To encourage other organizations to follow in their footsteps, Hamiltonian Artists emphasizes the importance of community support, financial generosity, and a shared vision for a thriving arts scene.

In the end, the studios at Hamiltonian Artists are more than just spaces; they're a beacon of hope and possibility for artists in Washington, DC. They signify a commitment to nurturing the creative spirit, supporting emerging talent, and enriching the city's artistic landscape. As the doors of these studios open, they usher in a new era for the DC arts community, one marked by collaboration, inclusivity, and boundless artistic expression.

For more information and to apply for studio visit:

www.hamiltonianartists.org/studios

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