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# A Tiny, Shared Space for Creative Types



Susan Walsh

The Studio Recycled in Peekskill is the brainchild of Simon Draper.

By SUSAN HODARA  
Published: February 4, 2011

PEEKSKILL, N.Y.

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Todd Sargood

A studio in New Paltz, N.Y., in 2009.

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Susan Walsh

IN a small storefront on a commercial street here is a tiny artist's studio, a plywood shed 6 feet by 6 feet by 9 feet. Its walls are adorned inside and out; some parts are painted with stripes, others paneled with posters and colorful drawings. Called the Studio Recycled, it is the latest brainchild of Simon Draper, an artist and the founder of [Habitat for Artists](#), a Peekskill-based organization whose goals include fostering engagement between artists and their communities.

Since its inception in 2008, Habitat for Artists has erected and dismantled more than 40 sheds that served as short-term workspaces for local artists in strategic locations throughout the Northeast. Many of the tiny studios were outdoors and were used by individuals. Because of the season, the Peekskill shed is indoors; it is also one of several Habitat projects geared to multiple artists.

The studio and the 240-square-foot storefront in which it was constructed have become a temporary project space for nearly 30 artists, a place where they can work independently and collaboratively (though not all at the same time) until the whole setup is disassembled at the end of March.

"We're forming a creative community where artists can work and enter into dialogue with one another," said Mr. Draper, 50, a native of Wales who has lived in Cold Spring

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NO INDUSTRY, BUSINESS OR ASPECT OF SOCIETY WILL BE UNTOUCHED.

Lisa Breznak, a sculptor, worked on pieces to add to the walls.

since 1997. During the short life of the Studio Recycled, Mr. Draper hopes ideas will be exchanged and artwork will be created. Yet there is no stipulation that artists produce completed work, nor will there be an exhibition at the project's conclusion.

"When artists are collaborating, creativity becomes a way of thinking and acting on those thoughts, rather than winding up with a finished product," Mr. Draper said. "In that sense, this project is a representation of the creative process."

Open since mid-January, the Studio Recycled is precisely what its name implies. The shed is constructed from parts of previous Habitat sheds, its sections often layered with artwork, bearing witness to past artists' projects. All of Habitat's studios are built from reused and reclaimed materials to minimize the artists' carbon footprints. Sustainability is often incorporated into the artwork, as well.

"I'm encouraging people to contribute materials and even completed projects to rework or share with others," Mr. Draper said.

On a recent afternoon, [Lisa Breznak](#), a sculptor from Peekskill, was carving small chunks of polystyrene into figures she called "Recycled Souls" and then pinning them along the upper edges of the studio's walls.

"I'm using off-cuts from my larger sculptures," Ms. Breznak said, "and I'm also eyeballing things other people have brought in."

Mr. Draper said a shed could be assembled in a couple of days for about \$1,500, including labor and maintenance. "We're finding ways for artists to do work that is vibrant and vital without needing a huge budget," he said.

The Studio Recycled is being financed by Mr. Draper, but earlier Habitat for Artists projects have been co-sponsored by organizations including Turner Construction Company, ecoartspace and Rank Realty. Artists pay nothing to work in the sheds.

In terms of participating artists, the studio in Peekskill is Habitat's largest yet. Its most recent group project, "You Are Here," which took place in October in Rosendale, N.Y., consisted of 15 artists, some of whom are also involved in the Studio Recycled.

"We've extended the group in order to connect artists from Peekskill with Habitat artists from around the region," Mr. Draper said. And to connect with the surrounding community, there will be a reception on Feb. 12, a benefit sale of artwork on March 5 and 6, and impromptu events throughout the project's run.

"It's important for people to realize that there are serious artists living and working among them," Mr. Draper said.

*The Studio Recycled will be operational through March 31 in the Temporary Project Space, 1215 Park Street, Peekskill. Open to the public Saturdays, noon to 5 p.m., or by appointment. Reception, Feb. 12, noon to 5 p.m.; benefit artwork sale, March 5 and 6, 10 to 6 p.m. For more information: [habitatforartists.org](http://habitatforartists.org) or (845) 216-3507.*

A version of this article appeared in print on February 6, 2011, on page WE11 of the New York edition.

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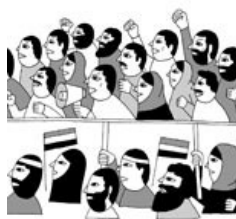


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