

# **Arts Entrepreneurship and the Importance of Shared Spaces**

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# **Abstract**

## **Arts Entrepreneurship & the Importance of Shared Spaces**

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Traditionally, arts education has been focused on theory and technique rather than on the practical application of skills. Many artists do not possess the entrepreneurial skills needed to work in their field. This research draws to light the difficulties of practicing art in urban centres and the need for alternative models of education. Akin Collective, a for-profit arts organisation based in Toronto, Canada, and its sister organisation Akin Projects, a nonprofit, are two such initiatives that have emerged and work together to address this issue. This thesis employs the case study method to provide an in-depth analysis of Akin's model of arts entrepreneurship education (Yin, 2014). Akin offers affordable studio spaces, professional development workshops and art-based programming. Non-traditional education and informal learning are explored. This research hopes to inform and educate. It is through collaboration and not competition that we grow. Akin embodies that ethos.

## **Acknowledgements**

In my opinion, the arts are the backbone of our society. In hard times we turn to them to distract us and cheer us up. In good times we celebrate with art. Yet despite how much we value these things in our lives we undervalue them in society and, in turn, we undervalue those who make them. Only a rare few artists are adequately compensated for their contributions. So where does that leave everyone else? What kind of certainty does that provide for those who wish to enter this career path? Artists seem to have an inner drive to create, despite the challenges that exist in pursuing a life of creativity. For me, my balance has come through arts education. I believe the government should be aiding local arts organisations in order to help support the local economy. It is the vibrancy of the city that attracts visitors and the arts that make a city come alive.

I would like to thank all the amazing staff and artists at Akin who were gracious enough to welcome me into their community. Through this research, I have felt firsthand the power that an artist community can have on your practice. I am proud to be from a city that has such initiatives and hope that this research will serve to further support their endeavours. I would like to thank: my thesis committee for their wisdom and specifically Dr. Lorrie Blair for all her support through this process; my friend Sharoni Sibony for her patience in editing my chapters; and lastly, my family and friends for their encouragement. I am especially grateful for my mom who has been my rock. The past few years in my life have been tumultuous, to say the least, and I would not be where I am today without love and support from these people.

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# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

For the past ten years I have worked as a high school art and business teacher with the Toronto District School Board. As an educator, I search for ways to help students succeed. In my experience, supported by academic research, many art students are discouraged from pursuing the arts due to concerns over future employability (Gangi, 2014). Many aspiring artists only see the hardships associated with the stereotypical “starving artist.” The problem is compounded when the entrepreneurial side of artists is discouraged, rather than nurtured, in traditional educational institutions. The notion that an artist is a “sellout” if they engage in entrepreneurial endeavours perpetuates this myth. Entrepreneurship is often linked with the idea of capitalism and treated with the same disregard (Gangi, 2014). It is essential that the skills needed to succeed as a professional artist are readily accessible. Arts entrepreneurship skills act as a “hidden curriculum” which decides which artists “will succeed and which are left behind” (Knochel, 2013). By engaging in this research I hope to bridge the gap between artistic and entrepreneurial skills.

The past two decades have seen a rise in the popularity and educational practices of, as well as research into, arts entrepreneurship. Yet, entrepreneurial education is still a rarity at most post-secondary institutions (Gangi, 2014). A 2006 study, the first and only of its kind, found that only 35 arts entrepreneurship post-secondary programs existed in the United States (Beckham, 2006). A central question among education researchers is whether supplementary education can fill in the gap for such entrepreneurial skills (Heilig, Cole, & Aguilar, 2010). While most arts entrepreneurship research has been focused on American initiatives, I hope to present a Canadian context for such endeavors. I conducted a pilot study, in the

winter of 2019 in order to uncover the challenges that Canadian artists encounter. Because it is one of Canada's largest cities, many artists move to Toronto to find work. I interviewed four visual artists, who all practiced in Toronto for the past decade, and were in various fields (animation, ceramics, photography and textiles). The participants of this study spoke to a lack of entrepreneurial education in their formal training. Another theme that emerged was the importance of community and mentorship. Based on these findings I decided to focus my research on Akin, a Toronto based organisation that is known for supporting artists.

Akin plays an important role in supporting artists in the City of Toronto. They have grown tremendously over the past ten years since their inception. With the increasing cost of living in the city, their model of affordable shared studio space is in high demand. The Toronto Arts Foundation surveys over 1500 artists and arts workers in Toronto yearly. In their 2019 Toronto Art Stats they found that 73% of people have considered leaving Toronto due to issues related to affordability ("Toronto Arts Foundation", 2020). Akin is run by artists who are committed to keeping rents affordable.

Akin consists of two separate but interrelated entities. Akin Collective offers affordable studio space and a community of artists ("Akin Collective", 2019). Akin Project offers art-based programming to engage membership and build skills ("Akin Collective", 2019). I was personally drawn to Akin through their art walks, which involve visiting local galleries and shows. Their model of community building and entrepreneurial education aligns with the themes from my preliminary research. As such, I have undertaken a more in-depth investigation into this organisation.

The purpose of this study is to investigate an alternative model for arts entrepreneurship education. I explored the effectiveness of shared art spaces to

transmit knowledge in this research. This work will address the following questions:  
What arts entrepreneurship skills do artists need? How is specialised knowledge transmitted between artists? What programming is currently being offered through Akin Collective to help artists?

This thesis is presented in seven chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the scholarly literature and theoretical foundation on arts entrepreneurship education. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and data collection used in this study. Chapter 4 provides a detailed summary of the member survey conducted as part of this research. Chapter 5 recounts the winter 2020 programming and its part in the arts entrepreneurship education taking part at Akin. Chapter 6 provides firsthand accounts of the effectiveness of Akin's model of arts entrepreneurship education. Lastly, chapter 7 provides a summary of the findings from this research as well as recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

In order to get a more holistic view, I conducted a literature review using the keywords: *entrepreneurship*, *visual arts* and *informal learning*. In my audit trail I searched Google Scholar, Concordia University Library and Artivate databases to find academic research on arts entrepreneurship. I found 36,000 articles through these keywords on Google Scholar and discovered the term *arts entrepreneurship* which describes this field. With the keywords *arts entrepreneurship* I got 347,000 results on Google Scholar. I narrowed down the search by focusing on visual arts and informal learning and selected the top articles. I found that this field is relatively new, with most of the research primarily from the American perspective. There are disputes on how to best support this learning and the role of the educator in this process.

#### **Arts Entrepreneurship**

Arts entrepreneurship is a relatively new field in academia. Often called by different names including “arts entrepreneurship, arts entrepreneurs, creative entrepreneurship, creative entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurs and culturepreneurs,” it denotes people who derive their income from their art (Hausmann & Heinze, 2016). The technological development and adoption of an online marketplace have changed the way the art world works. Artists are now able to connect to a wide variety of patrons that they were previously unable to access. With this came an increased pressure to be competitive on a global scale and to have the toolset to do so (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015).

The field of academic research into arts entrepreneurship only started in the last two decades. Ruth Rentschler, one of the founding researchers in this field, wrote *The Entrepreneurial Arts Leader* in 2002, about the decrease in funding for the arts. Rentschler was the head of Dowater School of Management and Marketing at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia and an editor of the *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society (JAMLS)*. *JAMLS* was the first publication to dedicate an issue to arts and entrepreneurship, in the fall of 2003 (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015). Many core concepts of arts entrepreneurship were introduced in this issue. However, it was not until 2006, when Gary Beckham published his findings on the teaching of Arts Entrepreneurship in post-secondary institutions America in *JAMLS* that the popularity of this field was solidified. Funded by the Ewing Kauffman Foundation, Beckham found that 36 post-secondary arts entrepreneurship programs existed in the United States at the time. Traditionally, music programs have been early adopters to arts entrepreneurship education. “Eastern School of Music *Arts Leadership Program* began in 1996[;]... in 1998 University of Colorado at Boulder established *Entrepreneurship Centre for Music[; and]*... Columbia College Chicago’s *Arts Entertainment and Media Management* program started in 1992” (Beckman, 2006). The theatre program *The Performing Arts Venture Experience* at Arizona State University was established in 2007 and was next on board with entrepreneurial education in the arts field (Gangi, 2014).

Research into arts entrepreneurship is on the rise. In 2011, Scherdin and Zander published a book called *Art Entrepreneurship* (Rivetti & Migliaccio, 2018). Shortly after, in 2012, *Artivate*, an online journal, was launched to help develop the field and create a platform to share research on arts entrepreneurship. Edited by Gary Beckman and Linda Essig, *Artivate* is aimed at helping “scholars, educators,

policy makers, emerging and working arts professionals and the public understand the field” (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015). Another journal dedicated to arts entrepreneurship, *Journal of Arts Entrepreneurship*, emerged to address this topic (Rivetti & Migliaccio, 2018). By 2014, the field of arts education was steadily on the rise and by June 2014 the *Society for Arts Entrepreneurship Education* launched its first conference in Dallas, Texas (Chang & Wyszomirski, 2015). Rivetti and Migliaccio found three sub-themes in their 2018 literature review on arts entrepreneurship: the culture-business relationship, the similarities between the artist and the entrepreneur and the idealized arts entrepreneur (Rivetti & Migliaccio, 2018). The field of visual arts entrepreneurship education is still under-explored in academic research and it is this gap that I hope to address.

### **Implementation of Arts Entrepreneurship Education**

There are a few schools of thought in terms of how arts entrepreneurship education should be handled. Currently arts entrepreneurship education takes place in the following forms: centres/institutions dedicated to arts entrepreneurship; institutions offering ancillary courses; cross-campus entrepreneurship minors; art entrepreneurship academic programs; and arts accreditation organisations (Gangi, 2014). Post-secondary institutions are slowly embracing the idea of including professional development and entrepreneurial skills as a part of the curriculum, but are divided about how to go about this. Arts entrepreneurship programs take either a cross-disciplinary approach, where entrepreneurship concepts are taught with the arts subject matter (such as in Arizona State University where students get a minor in business), or a specific arts entrepreneurship minor (where courses are focused on the skills artists need), or even an arts entrepreneurship focus in the business

school (such as at UWMadison) (Welsh, Onishi, DeHoog & Syed, 2015).

Alternatively, schools are offering workshops and guest speakers, which have generally resulted in low attendance (Welsh, Onishi, DeHoog & Syed, 2015).

According to Bridgestock, most art students want to be artists, thus it is better to focus on developing artist entrepreneurs and an adaptive career identity (Bridgestock, 2012). An adaptive career identity is one which can be developed at the start of the program as students are encouraged to explore career possibilities. As students continue in their program they are encouraged to be open to possibilities, and are taught how to create new ventures. Communities of practice are undertaken as students are encouraged to co-create projects with other professionals in the field. Experiential learning and embedded arts entrepreneurial skills are recommended from Bridgestock's research findings. Incubator programs are becoming an increasingly more popular model for arts entrepreneurship education as they provide the funding, mentorship and camaraderie needed to help new businesses succeed. Art incubators allow for a decreased risk, lower barriers to entry, legitimacy and increased sustainability in art ventures (Essig, 2018). In his 2011 research into the economic benefits of investing in the arts, Grodach found that there were direct economic benefits (in terms of skilled labour, specialised services and business attraction) and indirect benefits (such as enhancing interaction in communities and hence increasing tourism and other revenue streams) to incubator programs (Grodach, 2011). However, the arts incubator model is often criticised in that some arts organizations become dependent on the incubator to survive (especially in areas where rent is high) (Grodach, 2011). Although not common in Canada, arts incubators are on the rise in Europe as a way to build community and skills and to help develop one's practice.

## **Role of the Educator**

New technological changes have brought along with them new challenges for art educators. Artists need to understand the online language and culture of this technologically-fueled world. Without changes to art education curriculum, social media knowledge will continue to function as a hidden curriculum (Knochel, 2013). Jonathan Gangi coined the term *Artist's Meta-Praxis* in 2014, where he claims that a combination of intellect, artistic and entrepreneurial action is necessary for “successful artists” (Gangi, 2014).

There seems to be a new era of research in the field of arts entrepreneurship that focuses on experiential learning. With a focus on teaching for the world of the future, it aligns with Howard Gardner's theory from *Five Minds for the Future* (Essig, 2015). Gardner's theory is that there are “five specific ‘minds’ that individuals will need to be effective in the future,” those being the disciplined, synthesizing, creating, respectful and ethical mind (Duening, 2010). According to Gardner, “Disciplined Mind” students learn from the modelling of behaviour. Mentorship and learning from “masters” in the field is a long tradition in the arts. Building on Gardiner's work, in 2010, Tom Duening created the theory of the *Five Minds for the Entrepreneurial Future* (Essig, 2015). The five mindsets of the entrepreneurial future are: opportunity recognition, design, risk management, resilience and the effectuating mind (Duening, 2010).

Collaborative and experiential learning is at the heart of entrepreneurial education. Similarly communities of practice are important, as students are enriched by the ideas of their peers. “Students learn from the experience of launching or creating an arts-based venture” and the successes/failures that come with these

initiatives (Essig, 2015). In their research, Pollard and Wilson found that arts entrepreneurship education needs to be taught differently at the undergraduate and graduate level. Building on Beckham's findings it is recommended that the *new venture creation* be taught to graduate students and that *transitioning* be taught to undergraduate students (incorporating the entrepreneurial mindset in both segments of students) (Pollard and Wilson, 2014).

A study conducted at the 5th annual *Southern Entrepreneurship in the Arts Conference* in Greensboro North Carolina, found that art entrepreneurs face a number of challenges. The need for networking skills, peer support and management programs (that focused on marketing, finance, grant writing, etc.) and technology training (such as web development and social media) was identified from this survey (Welsh, Onishi, DeHoog, & Syed, 2015). Essig stresses the importance of mentorship, collaborative team projects and experiential learning for arts entrepreneurship education (Welsh, Onishi, DeHoog, & Syed, 2015). "With a firm intellectual foundation for the entrepreneurship curricula...we know why we are doing what we are doing in the entrepreneurship classroom" (Duening, 2010).

### **The United States' Perspective**

Although programs and initiatives are present throughout the world, the United States has been leading the field of arts entrepreneurship education. In 2012, North Carolina State University was the first of its kind to offer a minor in arts entrepreneurship (with a music focus) (Welsh, D., Onishi, T., DeHoog, R., & Syed, S. (2015)). Established in 2009, The University of North Carolina in Greensboro has the largest cross-campus entrepreneurship program for a school of its size (offering 47 courses amongst 26 departments) (Welsh, D., Onishi, T., DeHoog, R., & Syed, S.

(2015)). Gary Beckman's 2006 nationwide study of arts entrepreneurship programs in America, was and still is the first and only of its kind (Gangi, 2014). Beckham found that two streams of thought existed in arts entrepreneurship education. The most common is the focus on the curriculum or, as Beckham calls it, *new venture creation*. In new venture creation, "students learn the basics of starting a for-profit business, [and] growing the venture" (Beckman, 2006). The other stream that Beckham found, called *transitioning*, focuses on the "enterprising skills" that students need after graduation (Beckman, 2006). As mentioned, it was Beckham's study that put both American programs and arts entrepreneurship on the forefront of the educational proverbial hot seat. Arts entrepreneurship education has been proposed as one way of addressing the employability agenda of higher education. The artists have unique employment concerns in the arts in terms of job stability as their work is often part-time and contract in nature (Pollard and Wilson, 2014).

The art market in Canada differs greatly from its USA counterparts. As a scale of reference, "The United States' population is ten times that of Canada. New York City is home to over 16,332,000, whereas Toronto, Canada's largest city, has a population of 4,319,000" (Burt, 2003). With the US as its largest trading partner, there are many ties between the two countries. Yet, "many at home and abroad still believe that Canada is not a major or important player on the international arts scene" (Burt, 2003). More research is needed to better understand the art world and arts entrepreneurship specifically in Canada. "As a country with diverse regional markets and culture, Canada has a lot to offer" (Burt, 2003). This research looks at the Canadian response to the need for arts entrepreneurship education to help support artists.



## **Theoretical Framework**

This study explores the intricacies of art entrepreneurship education. Rooted in-practice, hands-on opportunities to learn are key to the professional development of artists. Akin offers experiential learning opportunities, communities of practice and social constructivist approaches to learning.

Experiential learning is based on John Dewey's work called "A Theory of Experience" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Dewey (1938) believed that practice and theory were interlinked. In his seminal work *Experience and Education*, Dewey analysed different education models to find out how students learn. Known as the father of progressive education, he proposed that socially-engaging and age-appropriate learning experiences were key (Dewey, 1938). Critical of traditional, teacher-led education models, Dewey argued that education needs experience-based opportunities embedded into it for rich learning. Dewey's philosophy of education left a strong imprint on the education world. Current learner-centered classrooms, such as those found in Montessori schools, align with Dewey's philosophy of education in that the curriculum is designed with students in mind. As such, experiential learning is at the heart of entrepreneurial education.

Kolb expanded on Dewey's work to create the Theory of Experiential Learning (ELT) (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). There are six tenets of this theory: learning is a process (rather than being outcome-based); all learning is relearning (drawing off prior knowledge); disagreements encourage learning (the debate brings out real learning), learning is all-encompassing (holistic education); learning comes out of new experiences; and learning is a process of creating knowledge (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). In short, experiential learning is holistic and allows students to learn by doing. Kolb draws on research that correlates this theory of education to how the brain functions

and learns. The learning cycle is composed of the frontal cortex (sensory) processing the sensory stimuli; the back cortex (integrative) is reflectively observing while the front integrative cortex is creating new concepts (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Learning styles and learning spaces are both important parts of ELT. It is important that the environment is conducive and open to learning.

ELT stems from Social Constructivism, as social knowledge is translated into the personal knowledge of the learner (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Lev Vygotsky, credited with founding Social Constructivism, believed that knowledge was co-constructed through social interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Learning is an individualised process based on the co-constructed knowledge of the community. Psychological Constructivism focuses on the individualised learning process whereas Social Constructivism takes into account “power, economic, social and political forces” and its effects on knowledge development (Richardson, 2003). There is a “social nature of formal knowledge development within an expert community” (Richardson, 2003).

Dewey and Vygotsky share a similar sentiment about the communal aspect to learning. Drawing off Piaget’s work in childhood development, Dewey emphasized “experience and shared purpose,” whereas Vygotsky emphasized “semiotics and shared meaning” (Mayer, 2008). They wrote critically of Piaget’s “exclusion of the cultural dimension of a child’s learning and development” as they believed that “active social engagement provides connections between these forms and the child’s worldview” (Mayer, 2008). “For both Dewey and Vygotsky, learning and development were interwoven with each other and the social and material worlds in complicated ways” (Mayer, 2008).

According to Paulo Freire’s Banking Concept of Education (1970), in traditional education settings the teacher bestows knowledge upon his/her pupils.

Students, according to Freire, have “an empty mind” that is “passively open to the reception of deposits of reality” (Freire, 2008). Since information is “deposited” into students, they are able to bank that information for future use (Micheletti, 2010). However, barring real connections, learning does not happen. “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention... human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2008). Only by breaking down power structures between the learner and those imparting knowledge can real learning happen.

“Communities of Practice” is a term that describes how people “learn through their participation...with [those with] whom they interact on a regular basis” (Wegner, 1998). At Akin this is often through shared studio space. Communities of practice originated from Etienne Wenger’s work with Jean Lave (Wenger & Lave, 1991). Their theory has a focus on shared learning, “as members engage in a collective process of learning” (Wegner, 1998). Unlike a team that is focused on a joint task, in “a community of practice...members...may engage in the same practice while working on different tasks...but they can still learn together” (Farnsworth Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016).

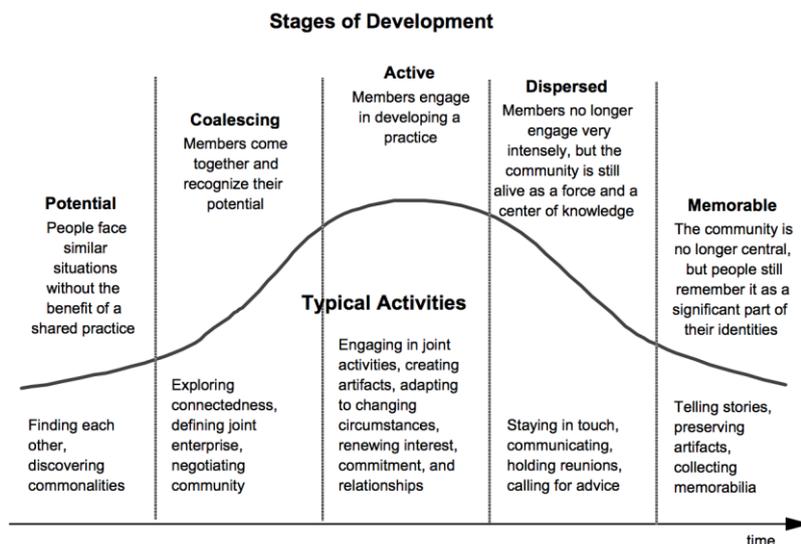


Figure 1: Wegner’s Development of Communities of Practice (Wegner (1998), p3)

According to Wegner, “education systems...focus on the technical dimensions of learning divorced from practice and identity. A lot of it ends up being about compliant alignment with curricular demands” rather than actual learning (Farnsworth Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016). This is why these informal learning spaces are so important. It is crucial that organisations support communities of practice and be aware of what role they play. “Power can prevent learning by silencing voices... and can become an obstacle to further learning” (Farnsworth Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016). A strong leadership can help communities of practice by supporting shared learning and providing guidance in some way. Organizations can legitimise participation in communities by providing time and space to collaborate. Although some guidance is helpful, it is best to let these communities evolve on their own.

“A community of practice...[is] defined as a community with a joint enterprise, shared repertoire, and mutual engagement” (Wenger, 1998). In mutual engagement it is important that participants are able to speak freely as there is “value of a specific piece of information and... the atmosphere of friendliness” (Wenger, 1998). By joint enterprise, it is meant that a community of practice is gathered for its own goals “even when...in response to some kind of external mandate” (Wenger, 1998). The shared repertoire refers to “routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has adapted in the course of its existence” (Wenger, 1998). The learners’ identities are formed by their experience in these communities, and as such it is a more holistic approach. For identity formation it is important that there be “three modes of identification: imagination, engagement, and alignment” (Farnsworth Kleanthous, & Wenger-Trayner, 2016). This draws to light the importance for proper support from organizations to encourage real learning and identity formation.

As organizations are constantly changing, complexity theory will be employed to help understand the dynamics at play. In complexity theory, organisms respond to their environment, hence changing it (Battram, 1999). This response loop continues as the organisms then need to respond to their new environment. In essence it is a bottom-up approach, as the organisation takes feedback and responds to the needs of its members (Morrison, 2006). According to Battram, complexity of an organisation increases over time. Organisations that respond to the individualised needs of their members are actively engaged in increasing complexity. In such cases, a complex adaptive system is ideal as when self-organizing and learning are at work, as the organisms are free to interact (Battram, 1999).

This research, according to service dominant logic, will be beneficial to more than just artists. In service logic, the focus is on mutual value creation. Service dominant logic states that services, rather than goods, are used as a means of economic exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2018). In the case of arts entrepreneurship, service logic shows the mutual beneficiary nature for both for the arts and the economy. As the arts help to bring new business and people to an area, supporting the arts in turn will help to build the economy. In the case of Akin, they employed service dominant logic and have found success in partnership with other organisations.

Due to the professional development aspects of Akin Projects, Akin was chosen for this study. The above theoretical foundations are all found in varying degrees in my research, some more explicit than others. Akin offers its members experiential learning opportunities in its programming such as its open house events and calls for submissions to shows. An aspect that makes Akin ideal for this study is the focus its staff have on community building. By renting out studio space, Akin

provides artists opportunities to interact and to create shared knowledge. Akin's model of informal learning will be analyzed through the social constructivist lense. In contrast to Paulo Freire's top down approach, Akin's model is more of collective learning. Though Akin does partner with experts to share knowledge, their model of education is more that of inquiry and individualised support. Akin satisfies the concerns brought by complexity theory by conducting surveys and asking for feedback on events in order to ensure that it is meeting the needs of its membership.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

For this study, I employed qualitative research using the case study method. According to Yin, the inquisitive in-depth nature of this research best suited this method. A case study investigates real-world situations in the context in which they reside (Yin, 2014). This research focused on visual arts, as studies have shown that most entrepreneurial programs cater to music or theatre (Beckham, 2006). A Canadian lens was used because, as discussed earlier, much of the research that has been developed so far was done in an USA context. A Toronto organisation was chosen for this research, as artists tend to move to larger cities for community and job prospects. I employed inductive coding to ensure that the major themes of this research emerge.

I employed Design Thinking to better understand how to help support artists succeed. Design Thinking consists of five stages: empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test (Interaction Design Foundation, 2019). The first step is to research the underlying needs of an issue. In my pilot study research, I interviewed four practicing visual artists to find out what challenges they encountered as professional visual artists. As outlined in step 2 of Design Thinking, I then defined these core problems. I found that there is an educational gap in terms of the skills that are needed to work in this field. As such, it has fallen to third-party institutions to fill the educational needs not provided by an art school education. Step 3 was to ideate. In identifying these gaps I looked for ideas and solutions in the marketplace. This study uncovered best practices in the field through the model provided by Akin. The fourth step is to create a prototype of possible solutions to the problem. By looking at Akin's model, this research provides a prototype for arts entrepreneurship

education. Finally, the last step of the Design Thinking methodology is to test out solutions. Due to the scope and timing of this work, such a step will be left to further studies.

### **Methods:**

In this research documentation, archival information, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artifacts were analysed (Yin, 2014). Operating as a shared community space, Akin was analyzed for both formal and informal learning taking place within its purview. Akin's website houses a wealth of archival information about its operations and programming. Akin Collective, and its sister organisation Akin Projects, were assessed as a whole as their programming was interlinked. A journal was employed to record anecdotal facts and observations during the interviews and events.

I participated in Akin's Winter 2020 programming for direct observation of their experiential learning model in action. In total, I went to seven of their events including two *Show and Tell* events, the *Open Studio at the MOCA*, a tax workshop, a tenant rights workshop, a studio closing fundraiser and Akin's *Art Chat* at the Artist Project. I conducted interviews with eight of Akin's staff and members, and in total eight hours were spent onsite interviewing on various days. Ranging from the founders of Akin to Akin studio members, I wanted to get a holistic view of the organisation. Two additional interviews of an hour each were conducted with the partner presenters of the tax and tenant rights workshops. These interviews were included within the event write-ups to add depth to those findings. All interviews were recorded for accuracy and later transcribed using the temi.com software. These recordings and subsequent

transcripts were compiled in a document called *Interviews* which is cited throughout this work.

The initial round of interviews commenced in November 2019 with an interview with Akin Collective co-director Michael Vickers whom I had met through my previous involvement with Akin. Mr. Vickers put me in touch with various people in the Akin community and in January 2020 I returned to Toronto for another round of interviews. In order to produce richer data, Akin staffs' identities were kept anonymous and they were referred to as Akin Staff #1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. A survey was later compiled to get anonymous feedback from the Akin community and sent out electronically in early February 2020. Google Forms were employed for the survey format and data analysis seen in Chapter 3. In total, 140 Akin members past and present responded to the Winter 2020 survey.

## **Data Collection**

### **Procedures:**

As preliminary research, a pilot study was conducted in Winter 2019 and focused on the artists' perspectives on what skills are needed as professionals. I interviewed four different visual artists, who graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) within the past ten years. Artists were chosen from different media (ceramics, animation, textiles and photography) in order to find commonalities within the various fields of art. Inductive coding was employed to ascertain the major themes and commonalities. The findings from the pilot project suggested a lack of career training in the artists' BFA programs. As such, my thesis work focused on art entrepreneurship education outside of the formal academic setting.

With approval from Concordia University's Research and Compliance Unit, interviewees were contacted (see Appendix A). The snowball method was employed to gain more participants for this study (see Appendix B). The purpose of the study was explained to participants and they were asked to consent to the ethical considerations of being involved. Interviews were arranged for approximately an hour in length and questions varied depending on the interviewees' affiliation with Akin. Questions were open-ended in nature and conducive to the flow of the conversation (see Appendix C).

Based on the initial interviews with the founders of Akin, a member-wide survey was compiled in collaboration with Akin staff. Google Forms were employed as they were able to be sent out easily through Akin's member email listserv. Questions were derived to ascertain the success of Akin's programming as well as areas for improvement (see Appendix D). In order to get a biased-free assessment of Akin's effect on their members' practice and professional development, all responses were submitted anonymously.

As part of my research I participated in the majority of Akin's Winter 2020 programming. Interviews lasted approximately an hour in length and were conducted at Akin studio spaces to enhance direct observations. I had the chance to speak with the co-directors of Akin Collective, the president of the board of Akin Projects, Akin staff, artists and workshop facilitators. Ten interviews were conducted in total to get a holistic sense of the organisation as well as its relationship to its community partners.

## **Data Coding**

### **Data:**

In order to analyse the research findings, I employed Saldana's coding system for qualitative data. Saldana outlines 32 different codes that can be employed (Saldana, 2009). For the purposes of this research I employed the initial coding (or open coding) for the "first cycle" to allow for an open-ended approach to coding the interviews from my research (Saldana, 2009).

Following Saldana's model, the "second cycle" method required more analytical skills. Axial coding was applied to get rid of redundant codes. Next, focused coding was employed to look for frequent codes and generate categories. Then pattern coding found similarities between codes. Themes were generated using electric coding which involved combining two or more first-cycle codes together and then sub-coding to find sub-themes within categories. Evaluation coding provided recommendations for further research based on the findings (Onwuegbuzie, Frels & Hwang, 2014). Sensitizing coding and other pertinent information are included in this research.

## CHAPTER 4

### Survey

Survey	Key Themes
Akin Member Survey 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Community</li><li>● Supportive</li><li>● Knowledge Sharing</li><li>● Creativity</li><li>● Affordable</li><li>● Exhibition Opportunities</li></ul>

Table 1: Akin 2020 Member Survey Themes

I compiled a survey in early 2020, in collaboration with Akin staff, to assess the needs of Akin’s membership. The last survey was done by Rania El Mugammar in 2018 and had a focus on equity and demographics. My 2020 survey took a more holistic approach to the initiatives and programming taking place through Akin. According to Michael Vickers, the co-director of Akin Collective, “it really gives a lot of insights [on] what we've done” and, in accordance with complexity theory, “it's dangerous to not be asking your customers how they think you're doing and what you're missing that they need” (Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). I compiled questions with both the needs of Akin and this research in mind. For confidentiality reasons I have included only questions pertinent to this research (see *Appendix D*).

## Survey Summary

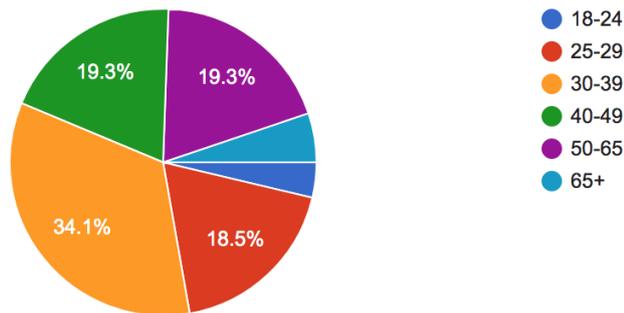


Figure 2: Akin Member Demographic Information (n=140)

Knowing the demographics of your community is essential for any organisation. Depending on the age and socio-economic background of your constituents, different programs are more effective than others. This was especially evident in the survey responses towards the timing and format of events. Many artists need to support their practice and are only able to join on evenings and weekends. Figure 2 shows the demographic breakdown of Akin’s membership by age. Correlating to question 3 in Appendix D, figure 2 graphically represents the responses of 140 Akin members. As seen, members range in age from 18-65+, with the majority of the membership in the 25-49 year range. This is significant for programming purposes as a lot of their social programming is catered to their younger members. It is in fact the diverse age range and “youthful energy” that attracts many older artists to Akin. Furthermore, the younger membership gains from

the informal mentorship and wisdom that older members bring.

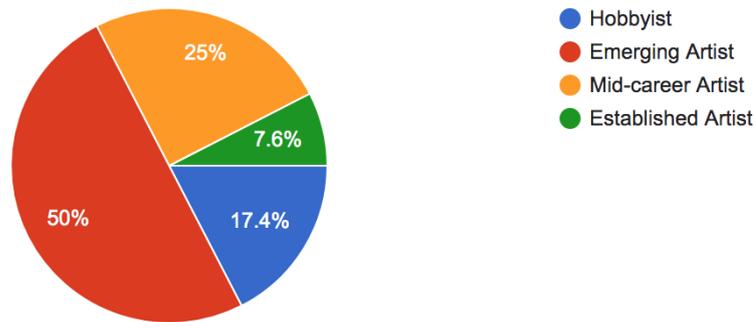


Figure 3: Akin Membership Career Stage (n=136)

Figure 3 represents 136 responses to Akin's members' stages in their artistic careers (refer to question 5 in Appendix D). Figure 3 shows that the majority of Akin's membership are emerging or mid-career artists. Half of Akin's membership are self-defined as emerging and a quarter are in their mid-career. Akin has positioned themselves in the market as a support for artists. Vygotsky's theory of Social Constructivism is in play as this common stage allows for knowledge to be co-constructed amongst Akin artists, regardless of age. The survey responses speak to the informal learning which happens in the shared studio spaces. Figure 4 represents 136 responses to question 7 in Appendix D. This figure demonstrates the positive influence Akin has on its membership. As seen in figure 4 below, Akin provides its members affordable space to create, insider information on the Toronto art world and an artistic community to support their practice. Overwhelmingly 80.9% of its members noted the importance of affordable studio space. The shared studio spaces create room for discourse, knowledge creation and community. When asked, 64% spoke to being connected to the artist community in Toronto through Akin, 50.7% reported a sense of community with other Akin artists and 55.1% were inspired by the practice of their peers.

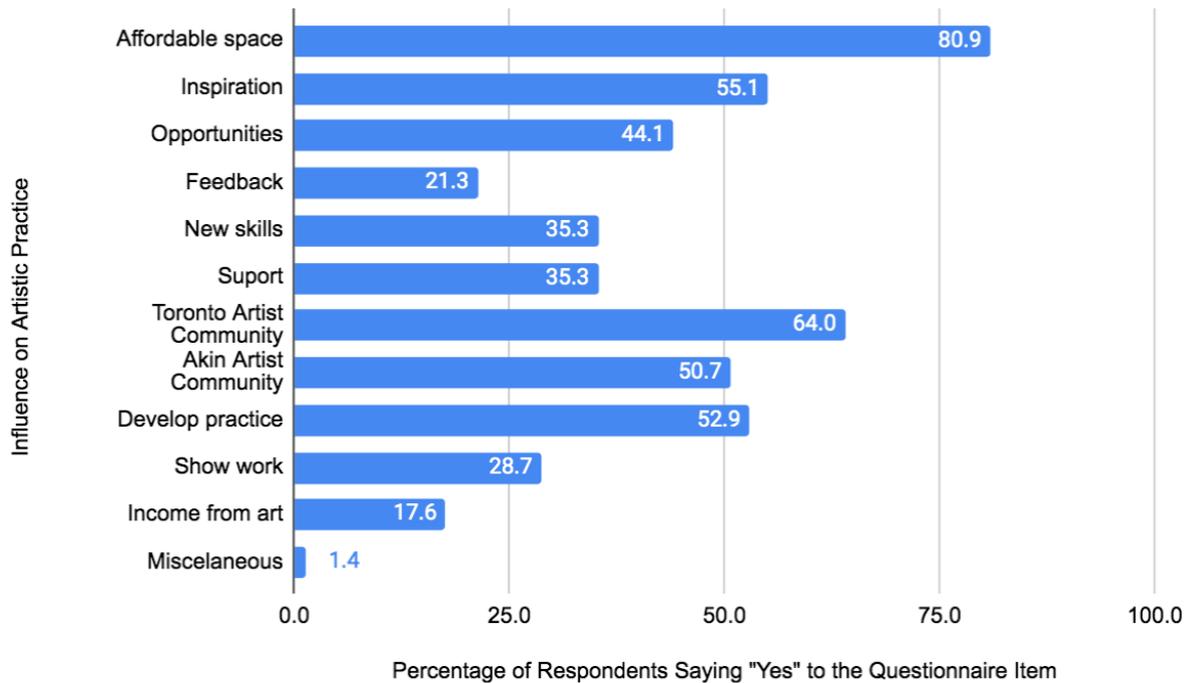


Figure 4: Akin's Influence on Artistic Practice (n=136)

Figure 5 represents 125 responses to question 15 in Appendix D. When asked if Akin was a mentoring environment, 23.2% of members spoke to feedback on their work, 32% said that they learned about opportunities through Akin, and 11.2% said that they learned new techniques (see figure 5 below). A few artists spoke of their experience as newcomer artists to Canada being mentored through the Toronto Arts Council's *Newcomer Artist Grant* program. Due to the funding associated with this grant, professional artists were able to be compensated for their time while sharing knowledge. However, only 3.2% of those surveyed reported being mentored. Although such mentorships have been well received, they have been limited in reach due to access to funding.

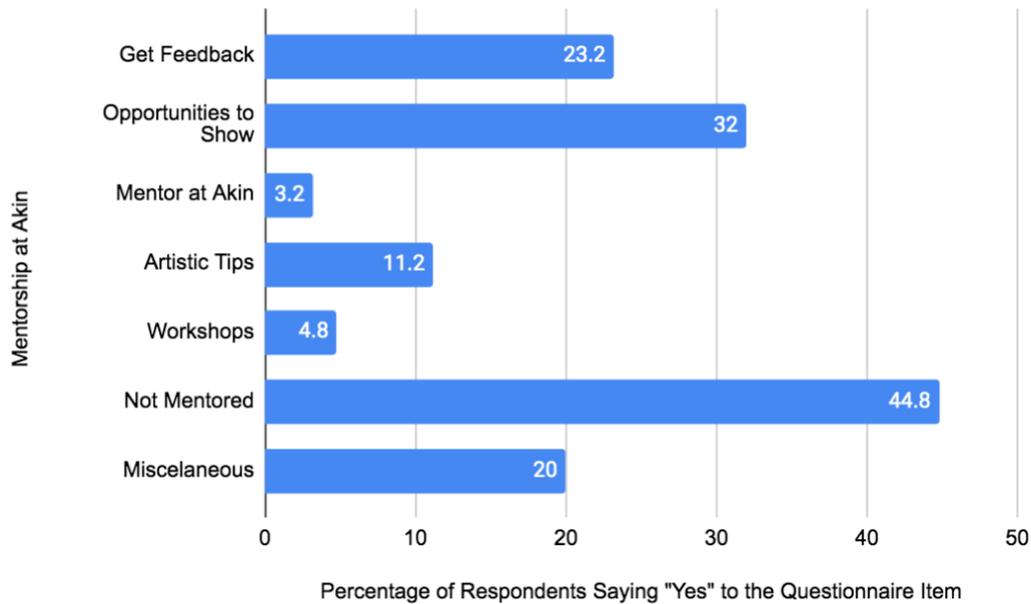


Figure 5: Mentorship at Akin (n=125)

The survey also shed light on a member-driven need for entrepreneurship workshops to support professional development. By offering skill-building workshops Akin helps support its members. Figure 6 graphically represents 120 responses (to question 19 in Appendix D) in regards to the popularity of workshops offered through Akin in the past year. As seen in figure 6, the workshops on taxes and grant writing were the most well attended of the programming. Learning new skills, producing work, and exhibiting were all on the top of member's goals this year according to the survey (see figure 7). Figure 7 represents 138 responses to question 16 in Appendix D in terms of the goals of Akin's membership. By creating events and opportunities to develop discourse, Akin helps to grow its community. Wegner's Community of Practice theory constitutes that people learn from those that they interact with regularly. Akin's community of artists is integral to its success. It is telling that the show and tell events and the studio parties were ranked the most popular in this survey (see figure 8). Figure 8 represents 120 responses to question 20 in Appendix D. Members spoke to the need for even more social events to connect to the Akin

community. Yet, 57.6% of members have not attended a workshop/event and 86.4% of those who have attended an event have attended 2 or fewer workshops/events in the past year (see figure 9). Figure 9 represents 132 responses to question 21 in Appendix D in terms of the number of events/workshops that members have participated in through Akin.

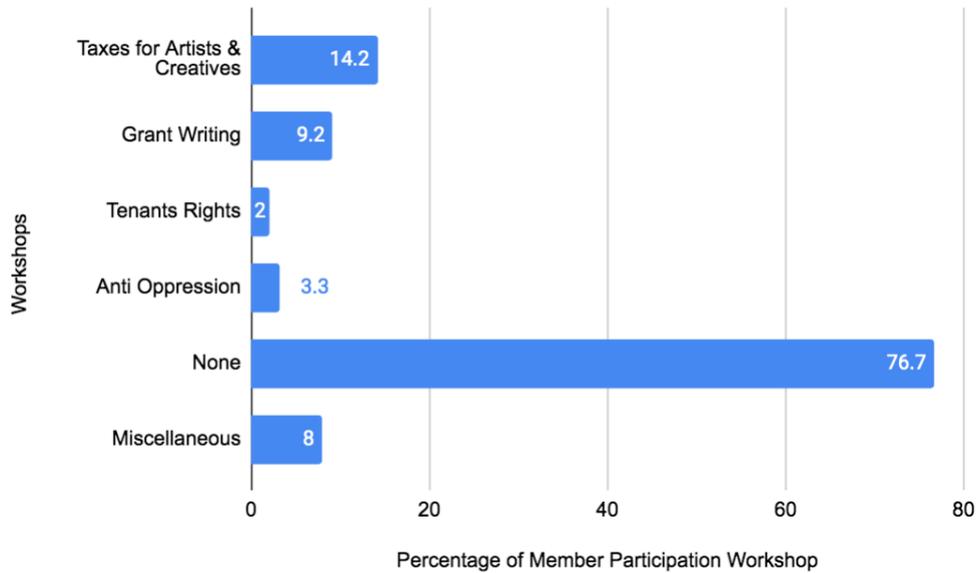


Figure 6: Akin Membership Participation in Workshops (n=120)

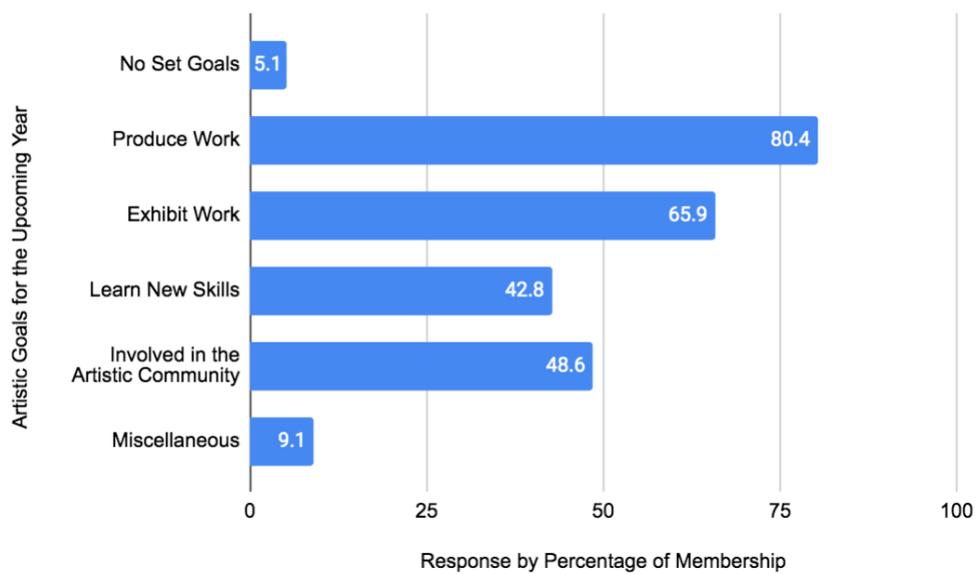


Figure 7: Members' Artistic Goals (n=138)

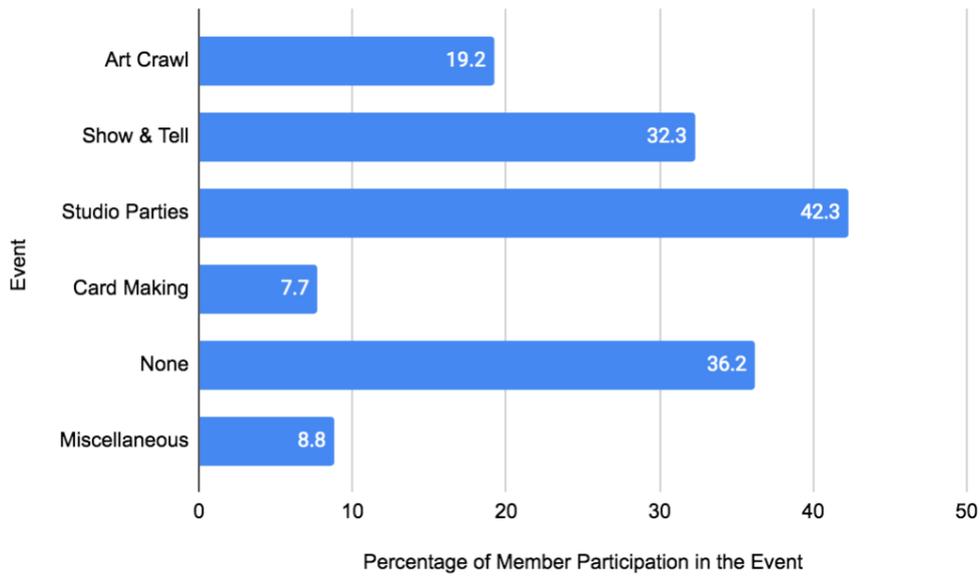


Figure 8: Akin Membership Participation in Events (n=130)

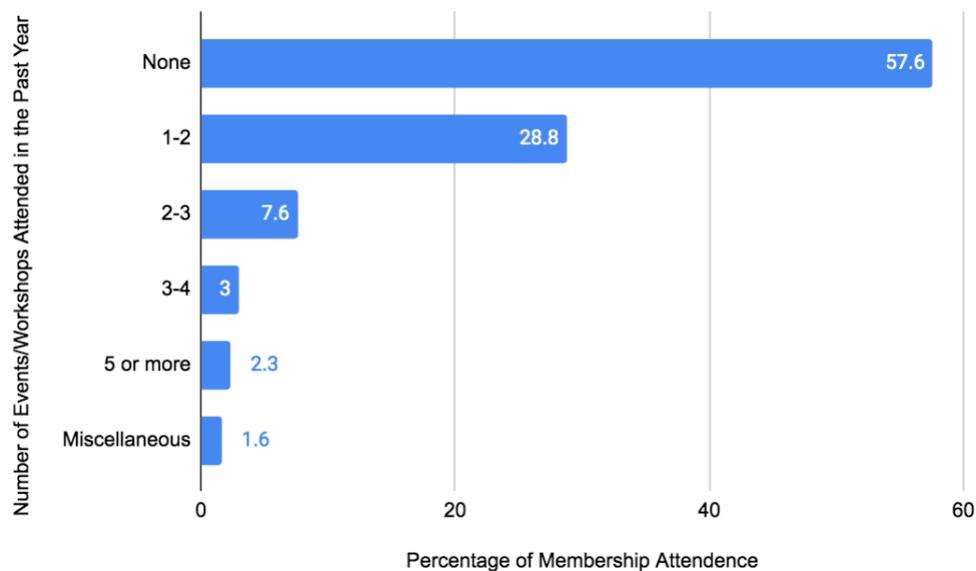


Figure 9: Akin Membership Participation in Events/Workshops (n=132)

Akin's members come from various levels of artistic training. Figure 10 represents 138 responses to question 6 in Appendix D which explains members' artistic backgrounds. The survey found that 33% of Akin's members were self-taught artists; 11.3% had only taken medium-specific workshops; 35.3% had an undergraduate degree in art; and 16.5% had a graduate degree in art (see figure 10). Building on their communities of practice, Akin could capitalise on the

knowledge base of their membership to create connections and skill-sharing opportunities.

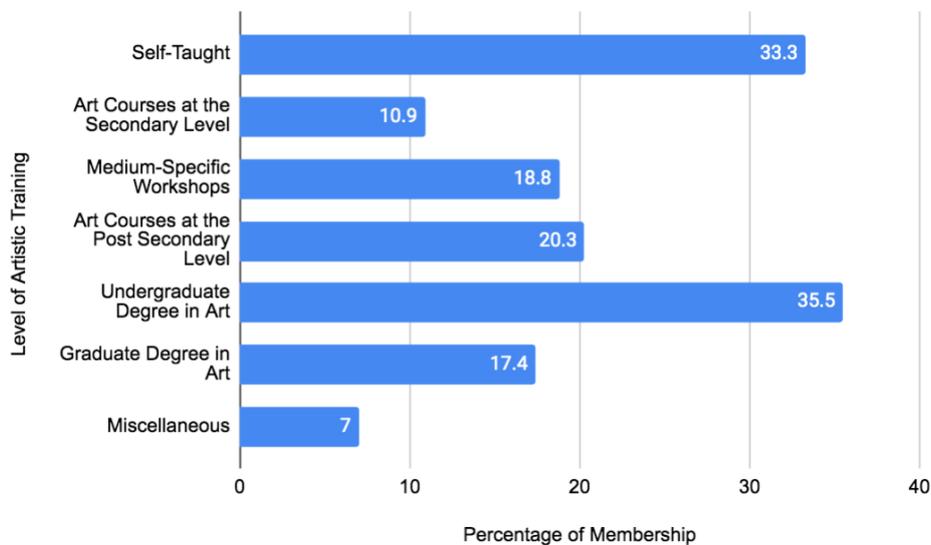


Figure 10: Akin Membership’s Level of Artistic Training (n=138)

## **Survey Findings**

The 2020 Member Survey provided valuable information for my research. It should be noted that although 140 Akin members were surveyed not all members answered all questions. The survey reinforced the importance of affordability in shared artistic spaces and Akin’s role in making being an artist in Toronto more affordable. Members spoke often of the arts community. By offering studio parties, show and tells and art crawls, Akin helps to build connections amongst its members. Akin’s programming, such as taxes for artists and grant-writing, help support members in their professional development. The survey showed that the majority of Akin’s members identify as emerging artists; therefore entrepreneurial training in terms of how to market, where to show work and how to present professionally are skills that need to be nurtured. Currently, specialised knowledge is being transmitted informally between artists in shared studios and through Akin’s online networks.

However this survey drew to light the member-driven need for mentorship to help share knowledge and support artists.

## CHAPTER 5

### Programming

Event	Description	Key Themes
<b>Taxes 101 for Artists and Creatives</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 06.11.2019</li> </ul>	This workshop was presented by Artbooks to teach artists about the intricacies of doing their taxes and answer questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Business Skills</li> <li>● Partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Tenant Rights Workshop</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 09.11.2019</li> </ul>	This workshop was put on in partnership with Xpace by Aura LLP to educate renters on their rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Advocacy</li> </ul>
<b>Show and Tell- Handmade Gifts at Akin Ossington</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 04.12.2019</li> </ul>	This event is a community-building event where artists can get feedback on their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Informal Learning</li> </ul>
<b>Show and Tell- Akin Sunrise</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 26.01.2020</li> </ul>	This event is a community-building event where artists tour their studio spaces and get feedback on their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Informal Learning</li> </ul>
<b>Lansdowne Farewell Party</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 31.01.2020</li> </ul>	Due to the rising rent in Toronto, the Lansdowne studios are no longer affordable. This event was a closing party for that space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Advocacy</li> </ul>
<b>Akin Moca Open Studio</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 05.02.2020</li> </ul>	Open studio in conjunction with a gallery event open to the public for the start of MOCA's new exhibition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Experiential Learning</li> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Community</li> </ul>
<b>Akin at the Artist Project</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 23.02.2020</li> </ul>	Akin booth and Art Chat on <i>The Role of Studio Spaces in Creating a More Equitable Artistic Community</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Advocacy</li> <li>● Exposure Opportunities</li> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Partnership</li> </ul>

Table 2: Akin's Programming of Events

Through Akin Projects, Akin offers programming for its members. According to Social Constructivist logic, Akin's programming encourages communities of practice through shared experience and meaning making. Traditionally Akin Projects has focused on three areas for its programming: *Creative; Community; and Forge*. *Creative* allows for its members to make art or learn new techniques, such as card-making, "drink and draws" and other skill-building workshops. *Community* are events in which Akin artists give back, such as working with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) or other local organisations to help the local community. *Forge* encompasses professional development initiatives, such as Grant Writing, Taxes for Artists and other networking events. Some of Akin's programming, such as the Artist Project or the Art Crawls, fits the mandates of multiple categories. The commonality among these programs is that they offer experiential learning opportunities embedded within social and relatively low-stakes activities. Programming is set seasonally and each season they attempt to offer programming in each of these three categories. Workshops, open to the public, offer skill-building resources for existing members as well as recruitment opportunities for artists new to Akin. Partnered with specialists from the field, these workshops are meant to address the needs of artists, both emerging and otherwise. Below are my findings based on participating in some of their Winter 2020 programming.

### **Winter 2020 Akin Programming**

#### **Workshop: Taxes 101 for Artists and Creatives**

Hosted by Akin

Facilitated by Artbooks

November 6, 2019, 6:00pm

Artbooks is a Toronto accounting firm that specialises in taxes for artists and entrepreneurs. Artbooks teaches its clients to understand their finances and how to be more proactive at different stages in their artistic career. Vickers was originally a client of Artbooks when he approached them to partner with Akin for tax workshops. Artbooks relies mostly on word-of-mouth marketing and, as such, tax workshops are a great way to advertise their business. In accordance with service dominant logic, in that both parties benefit from arrangements, this workshop helps both Artbooks with new potential clients and Akin artists with professional knowledge. Artbooks assumes that the cost of paying a presenter “will come back in marketing... we track to see what kind of referral we're going to get and with Akin that's been constantly good” (T.Epp, personal communication, December 2, 2019). Akin is an ideal partner for Artbooks as the size of their membership and affordable workshops mean that the tax workshops consistently have a good turnout. As artists operate as freelancers, they are essentially running their own businesses in the eyes of the government. This workshop provides artists with valuable information about the intricacies of filing taxes in Canada as well as providing a platform where artists are able to ask questions pertinent to their practice. The parallels of an artist as an entrepreneur were reinforced through the workshop as artists are essentially operating as a sole proprietorship. In total, approximately 50 people were in attendance and it should be noted that this is one of Akin's most popular workshops and has been held numerous times.

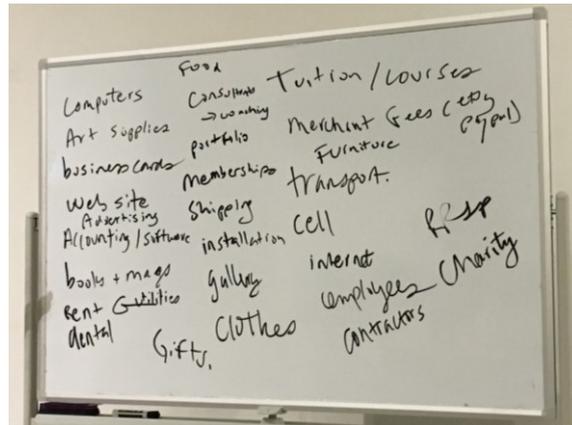


Figure 11: List of Artist Expenses Compiled at the Tax Workshop

### **Workshop Findings**

Properly allocating money flowing through their business is crucial for artists as it affects the amount of tax that they need to pay. Artist grants and knowing how to record them are essential resources and skills as “grants are really what keeps small visual artists afloat in this country” (T.Epp, personal communication, December 2, 2019). This workshop focused on knowing what can and cannot be written off as a business expense. Artbooks used artists’ concerns as a starting point to clarify misconceptions, rather than depositing information on its learners in a Freire style, top down (see figure 11). In short, business expenses should help to prove that the business is intending to earn a profit. If the expense helps the artist more than the business, it is best to keep that in the personal income tax information.

### **Workshop: Xpace x Akin Tenants Rights**

Hosted by Akin and Xpace Cultural Centre  
 Facilitated by Ryan Martin from Aura LLP  
 November 9, 2019, 1:00pm

Akin holistically supports its members by offering workshops to help their mental and physical wellbeing. Many landlords are employing questionable means to force tenants out of their homes and charge higher rents. As artists typically skew towards the lower end of the financial spectrum, there tend to be many artists who

are renters. This workshop covered: common tactics used by landlords, rights of tenants and tips and tricks for dealing with landlords. According to the workshop facilitator, Ryan Martin, “what we're seeing in Toronto in particular is *landlord's own use*...basically tenants are getting kicked out” (R. Martin, personal communication, January 22, 2020). Another similar rent increase tactic to increase rent is known as *renoviction*, the process of evicting tenants under the guise of repairs.

The workshop facilitator Mr. Martin, a former musician, was an invaluable resource. Through his experience working in legal aid at the Parkdale Legal Clinic, he acquired firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of Toronto's Landlord and Tenant Board. He has participated on panel talks through the Art Gallery of Ontario on “Alternative Working and Studio Spaces for Creatives” (R. Martin, personal communication, January 22, 2020). According to Mr. Martin, communities of practice are created through shared creative spaces; in his experience, you “incubate music by having musicians in one building” (R. Martin, personal communication, January 22, 2020). He is passionate about the rights of the creatives in our city and the value that they bring. Aligning with Akin’s ethos, and with service dominant logic, he believes “proper planning in the city isn't just good from a social perspective. It's also good from an economic perspective” (R. Martin, personal communication, January 22, 2020).

### **Workshop Findings**

It is important that tenants have a lease and understand their rights and responsibilities. Advocacy groups such as Advocacy Centre Tenants Ontario (ACTO) and support available from legal aid were reinforced throughout the workshop. Landlords have the right to evict their tenants if there is a nonpayment of rent,

damage to property or if they plan on moving in. Otherwise, the tenant is entitled to quiet enjoyment of their space, with vital services such as a toilet, heat and hot water. As creatives often use commercial spaces as work/live spaces, Mr. Martin cautioned that “could be problematic because you would not have the ability to make a claim under the residential tenancy act” (R. Martin, personal communication, January 22, 2020). Proper paperwork and procedures must be undertaken before landlords are legally allowed to evict tenants and written documentation of communications was stressed throughout.

### **Event: Show & Tell- Handmade Gifts at Akin Ossington**

Hosted by Akin

December 4, 2019, 6:00pm

Show and Tell events at Akin are an interesting model of informal learning. Aligning with the communities of practice model, these events help artists by sharing tips and getting feedback on their work. I had the opportunity to join in the December event at Akin Ossington. It should be noted that the Ossington studios are subdivided into separate units which affects how much that community is able to interact on a normal basis. Although small in attendance, less than ten people total, it did indeed feel like we were building a community as we sat around the shared studio table in the basement of Akin Ossington. Although this event had a theme of handmade gifts, people were encouraged to share whatever they were working on.



Figure 12: Akin Ossington Studio Space

At the Show and Tell events, artists get feedback from their peers and tips on resources. One artist, a printmaker, shared with the group that she uses *spoonflower.com* to be able to print her art on fabric. Another artist, a textile artist, shared that they go to *Cansew* and *Canadian Steam Iron and Sewing Company* to fix their machines, a trade which has become increasingly hard to find. In short, it was an opportunity to share insider knowledge as well as bonding over common interests. As well, it was an opportunity for Akin to connect with its members and share resources to help them in their practice. We spoke of the discounts offered to Akin members at local art supply stores, health insurance for artists (Akin is part of COHIP, a coworking health insurance plan) and mental health resources (such as discounted therapy in the city for those in financial need).

### **Event: Show & Tell- Akin Sunrise**

Hosted by Akin

January 26, 2020, 12:00pm



*Figure 13: Image Transfer Demonstration at the Akin Sunrise Show and Tell*

Unlike Akin Ossington's approach to gather people in a common area within the studio, Akin Sunrise uses the artists' studio spaces for their Show and Tell event. Akin Sunrise's studio spaces are all on the same floor, making this format more accessible. Approximately 20 people were in attendance sharing insider information including shows to apply for, where to buy supplies and interesting tips and techniques. For example, one artist shared a new silk screening technique that they learned at a recent workshop. Using fabric dyes painted on a silk screen mesh, one can use wall paste to transfer the image to paper. To the delight of this artist, the ghost image of the print was discovered to be a great base of future artwork and layered prints. Even to an outsider, this was an inclusive event that spanned different media and ages.

### **Event: Akin MOCA Open Studio**

Hosted by Akin

In conjunction with Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)

February 5, 2020, 6:00pm



Figure 14: Moca Patrons at the Winter 2020 Opening

In conjunction with the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)'s *Winter 2020 Members Preview & Public Opening* Akin opened its MOCA studio doors to the public. Since 2017, Akin has held studio spaces on the fourth floor of the MOCA. Like other Akin studio spaces, artists pay for the rental space within the MOCA studio spaces. Artists apply for a one-year residency in hopes of leveraging connections. The residency spaces are competitive and are juried by “one Akin staff member, one MOCA curator and three other art professionals in Toronto” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). According to the findings of this study's survey, Akin members predominantly “choose the MOCA studio... [because of the] programming and activities with the MOCA staff and their collectors” (Bretholz, *Member Survey*, 2020). This event epitomises the opportunity to interact with MOCA patrons as many people come to MOCA's seasonal opening party. As well this event provided experiential learning opportunities for artists in terms of presenting and selling their work.

### **Event: Lansdowne Farewell Party**

Hosted by Akin

January 31, 2020, 8:00pm

This community event was to commemorate the end of an era as Akin said goodbye to one of its oldest studio spaces. Due to the increasing rent prices in the city of Toronto, Akin can no longer afford to stay at the Lansdowne studios. The rent has “gone up by almost 70%” since they moved into the space in 2014 (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Unfortunately this is not the first studio closure which Akin has faced due to increasing rent prices. According to Michael Vickers, Akin Collective co-director, “that’s the gentrification story of artists moving into an area, making it cool and pricing themselves out, which we are experiencing” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Akin gives notice in the event of studio closure and helps relocate its artists. According to Akin staff, members “don’t like [having to relocate], but... it’s become part of the culture that you will be displaced” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020).



Figure 15: Fundraising for the Akin Rent Relief Fund

Studiomates and Akin members came together one last time to celebrate this space and shared memories. Having social gatherings like these are a throwback to Akin’s early culture. It allows for artists to network and interact in a more casual setting with social ease. All the proceeds from selling drinks went towards Akin’s *Rent Relief Fund*, another community-building initiative. This fund is meant to

provide Akin members with “anonymous, one-time emergency grants...[for] unexpected situations or times of financial instability” (“Akin Collective”, 2020). As artists often have precarious work, this fund supports the Akin family in times of need.

### **Event: Akin at the Artist Project**

Hosted by the Artist Project  
Art Chat facilitated by Akin  
February 23, 2020, 1:00pm



*Figure 16: Akin's Booth at the Artist Project*

The Artist Project is a renowned North American art show in which artists from all over come to Toronto to attract the attention of collectors, curators and potential galleries. As the nonprofit partner chosen by the Artist Project, Akin received free “booth space really close to the entrance [which]...acts as a big advertisement for Akin” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Akin’s staff juried art from its membership base in order to curate its booth. Akin’s co-director, Michael Vickers, credits the Artist Project decision to “give it to an organisation that's focused on supporting other artists” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). In classic service dominant logic, Akin promotes the Artist Project to its

membership in return for being included in the show. Akin was also invited to facilitate a talk as part of the programming for the 2020 Artist Project.

The *Art Chat* brought to light the issue of equity in the arts and Akin's role in helping to level the playing ground. Akin hosts approximately 350 artists in its various studio spaces across Toronto and often finds itself in an advocate role. The talk was facilitated by Oliver Pauk and was a panel discussion with Michael Vickers, Akin Elder Artist in Residence Catherine Tamarro, and Talitha Tolles, Artist & Indigenous Rights Activist. Tamarro highlighted that "art statistics in 2019 reported that around the fact that 73% of artists in Toronto are considering leaving Toronto... [and that] half of all artists in the city make under \$30,000 per year" (Vickers, M., Pauk, O., Tamarro, C. & Tolles, T., 2020). The discussion was focused on how studios and smaller arts organizations can help create a more inclusive artistic community in Toronto.

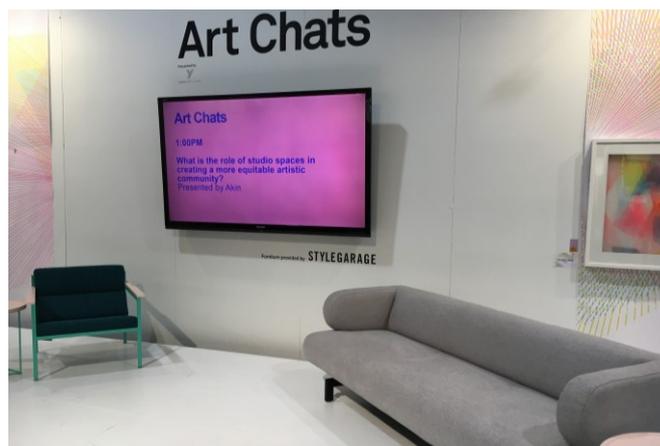


Figure 17: Akin's *Art Chat* at the Artist Project

When an artist's work is undervalued it creates a ripple effect in the community. The "philosophy of working for exposure...[and that] cultural workers are expected to provide culture for the city, for nothing" was one such issue that was raised (Bretholz, *Interviews*, 2020, p80). This issue is compounded when artists compete with each other on pricing and are "willing to work for next to

nothing...undercutting older established artists” (Vickers, M., Pauk, O., Tamaro, C. & Tolles, T., 2020). The importance of partnership and mentorship as well as working together for the common goal of supporting the arts in Toronto were stressed in this talk.

## **Programming Findings**

From Akin’s 2020 programming we learn the importance of community partners and leveraging those relationships. Artists need to understand that in the eyes of the government they are considered a business entity. By shifting the focus to help develop business-related skills, Akin empowers its members, whether in terms of the accounting side of being an artist (through the Artbooks tax workshops) or in terms of the marketing side of being an artist (through the open studio at the MOCA or the booth at the Artist Project). Providing experiential learning opportunities is key to this entrepreneurial education model. Aligning Kolb’s Theory of Experiential Learning, Akin draws off member’s prior knowledge and learning is seen as a process that comes from new experiences. Specialised knowledge is transmitted through artists informally in shared studio spaces and more formally facilitated through the show and tell events. Akin’s community of practice is a holistic one focusing on member wellbeing and support. Their programming helps to strengthen their community and address its needs.

## CHAPTER 6

### Interviews

Interviews	Role in Akin	Key Themes
<b>Michael Vickers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 07.11.2019</li> </ul>	Co-Director of Akin Collective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Programming</li> <li>● Adaptable</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> </ul>
<b>Michael Dellios</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 3.12.2019</li> </ul>	Co-Founder of Akin and President of Akin Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> <li>● Programming</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> </ul>
<b>Akin Staff #1</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 4.12.2019</li> </ul>	Marketing and Programming Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adaptable</li> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Programming</li> <li>● Community</li> </ul>
<b>Akin Staff #2</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 18.12.2019</li> </ul>	Operations Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Experiential Learning</li> <li>● Partnerships</li> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Exposure Opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Akin Staff #3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 10.11.2019</li> </ul>	Studio Manager and Programming Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Exposure Opportunities</li> </ul>
<b>Akin Staff #4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 27.01.2020</li> </ul>	Administration, Studio Manager & Programming Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Experiential Learning</li> <li>● Advocacy</li> </ul>
<b>Enes Satir</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 25.01.2020</li> </ul>	Akin Artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Mentorship</li> <li>● Professional Development</li> <li>● Experiential Learning</li> </ul>
<b>Nicole Crozier</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 28.01.2020</li> </ul>	Akin Artist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Partnership</li> <li>● Community</li> <li>● Experiential Learning</li> <li>● Exposure Opportunities</li> </ul>

Table 3: Interviewed Participants

Aligning with Battram's *Complexity Theory*, Akin is in a feedback loop in that it is constantly responding and adapting to the needs of its members. As such, I undertook a holistic view of Akin's operations. I conducted eight interviews with staff,

founders and members in order to get a better understanding of Akin's inner workings. Alongside the member survey, this bottom-up approach allowed for feedback from different perspectives. Akin has created a complex community that aligns with Vygotsky's *Social Constructivist Theory*. Vygotsky believed that knowledge was co-constructed through social interaction with others which is what my research showed as well. I interviewed people who could speak about Akin at its various stages of development over the past decade. It should be noted that although I was unable to interview the co-founder of Akin and co-director of Akin Collective, Oliver Pauk, due to time constraints, he was present and contributed to both Michael Vickers' and Michael Dellios' interviews.

## **Interview Summaries**

### **Michael Dellios (President of Akin Projects)**

As a founding member of Akin, Michael Dellios has been with the organisation from its inception. Currently he is the President of Akin Projects, running the board and helping set the programming each season. Akin's origin came from the extra time that Dellios had on the lease of his former loft space. At the time, Oliver and Michael were in two bands together, "one called *Make Your Exit* and the other band was...called *Endurable*" (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). "Doing most of [their] work from home" was challenging to say the least and "not that conducive to real productivity" (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Akin originally started as a shared space for Michael and Oliver and their artist friends to be creative. The name Akin was an inside joke from their high school circle of friends. They used the term to refer to each other in the sense that they "were bonded/connected" or kin to each other (M. Dellios, personal communication,

December 3, 2019). This name still applies to the atmosphere and community that is being fostered at Akin.

Although there were other co-working spaces in Toronto, Akin's model stood the test of time due to its unique focus on affordability, programming and community. In November 2008, Akin opened its first studio in Parkdale in Dellios' old loft space and with eight creative friends. "We were doing all sorts of activities whether it was film screening or art exhibitions, parties of all sorts" (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). They quickly realised that "there was more to this" and more interest from the larger artist community for their model of shared studio space (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). "The original mission was [to provide] cost-effective studio space that emerging artists could afford to go to," according to Dellios (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019).

By February 2019, Akin moved into its Dufferin studios. By that time Akin had expanded from 8 to 25 artists. Akin has always had flexible leases with little commitment, as artists often have precarious work or studio needs. Akin's programming has historically focused on social activities, shared creativity and building community. "At least once a month [they had] some sort of gathering...we encouraged it to be a place that you'd be able to show your work" (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Fundraising for the cash-strapped start-up was always in the background of their events. However "the goal was always we wouldn't do [an event] if it didn't fulfill that other need of doing something that built community" (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019).

A common complaint of Akin staff is that they do not have time to focus on their own practice. For personal and artistic reasons, and with a heavy heart, Dellios

took a break from Akin and the city. Dellios returned to Akin in Spring 2016 as a studio member at Akin Dupont. Akin provided the “need[ed] community [and] people around” for his transition back to Toronto (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). According to Dellios, “there’s a substantial benefit [to getting out of your space] not just for your practice but for your mental health...a feeling of productivity”(M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Dellios credits Akin’s community with giving him the confidence to switch paths to take on more of the design end of furniture making: “I’m not sure I would be where I am now without getting into that space” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Further attesting to the power of communities of practice at Akin, Dellios later started another furniture company called *Muke* with Akin colleague Michael Vickers.

Currently, Michael Dellios is the president of the board of Akin Projects. Due to his in-depth knowledge of Akin, it was a natural progression for Dellios’ return to Akin. Under his leadership, Akin has created many partnerships and opportunities for its members. The *Forge* series of programming, which focuses on professional development, has traditionally been provided thanks to outside grants/partnerships. Service dominant logic is in play when partnering with other organisations in that they help to support the other’s initiatives. We saw this time and again in chapter 4 in Akin’s winter 2020 programming. “Akin Projects started because there were a lot of programs going on...so getting that nonprofit status was important to access funding” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019).

A more experiential approach rather than top-down is favoured in the programming offered through Akin. It’s really important for Akin Projects that its programming is engaging, accessible and relevant to its membership. According to Dellios, a lot of programming ideas come from “what we see our peers and what we

see members struggling with” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). The vision for Akin moving forward is “to expand on the program that already exists, identify the program[s] that we think [are] working and that [are] being attended, developing different formats of delivering” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). It is important that programming is responding to the needs of its patrons which “could be anything from selling more artwork to understand[ing] the business side of things” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019).

Akin artists choose their studio space based on need and availability. However, there are no official guidelines about which artists work in which spaces. Dellios foresees a “*Heavy Duty Akin* space” one day as he believes that “there’s a need in the city” for a space for woodworkers to create, yet is weary of the “liabilities... investments... [and] staffing that comes along with it” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). At the moment, Akin’s studio space is not medium-specific; Akin has as “its focus” to be an affordable shared space for artists and “there is not a huge need to dilute it” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Although creating medium-specific studios would add value in terms of shared learning, it would increase the cost of studio rental and create a barrier to entry. In the end, creating an inclusive environment is paramount to Akin. Akin tries to rent affordable space and in order to do that they often find themselves in “spaces that are going to get demolished in a year” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Although Akin is nomadic in its locations, it is grounded in its ethos of providing affordable studio spaces.

### **Michael Vickers (Co-Director of Akin Collective)**

Michael Vickers is currently the co-director of Akin Collective, in charge of the studio rental side of Akin. Michael joined Akin in 2011 to connect to the Toronto arts community and find studio space. Michael had an “understanding of the art world... [and the] programming aspect of things based on his experience” working at the MOMA PS1 in New York (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Before long, Vickers was helping with the programming side of Akin. “Things are easier and more doable as a creative in the city if you share... I think that is sort of the informal slogan of Akin” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

Akin is a grassroots operation that has had to be resourceful in order to survive. According to Vickers, “programming...was like a marketing tool as well...because we didn't have a budget for marketing” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Many people, myself included, learn about Akin through its events and workshops. Akin fills a niche in the city, providing affordable studio space and professional development opportunities for artists. “There's just such a demand for a lot of those things that often aren't taught in school. Like grant writing, how to do your taxes” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Akin leans on partnerships with organisations, such as the Toronto Art Council for their grant-writing workshop, to provide expert knowledge. Applying service dominant logic, Akin and its partners both benefit from the co-branding opportunities. According to Vickers, “Akin's way is to start collaborating with organizations that are bigger than we are to elevate our brand while supporting artists” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

Akin's model is very inclusive. “We don't really have any sort of criteria for who we let in as far as what defines them as an artist... (or) who is good enough to

get in” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). This removes a barrier to entry into the art world for emerging artists. It also means that the types of artists who are Akin members varies and that they can learn from and inspire each other across disciplines: “you'll see somebody who's doing woodworking besides somebody who's doing a collage beside somebody doing artsy video games” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

Traditionally, Akin was a space where programming and studio rental were intertwined. Recently Akin has shifted to a new model in which Akin Collective focuses on the studio rentals, while Akin Projects focuses on programming. There is a collaborative relationship between Akin Collective and Akin Projects, as seen in *Figure 18*. Both organisations share the common goal of supporting their members and the arts community in Toronto. Akin Collective has a “reciprocal service agreement” with Akin Projects (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). For example, at “MOCA... they're set up as a...charity...so they're leasing space to our nonprofit... Akin Projects... [who has] hired Akin Collective to manage the space for them” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Separating the business into a for-profit, Akin Collective, and not-for-profit, Akin Projects, has provided new funding and partnership potential to the sister organisations.

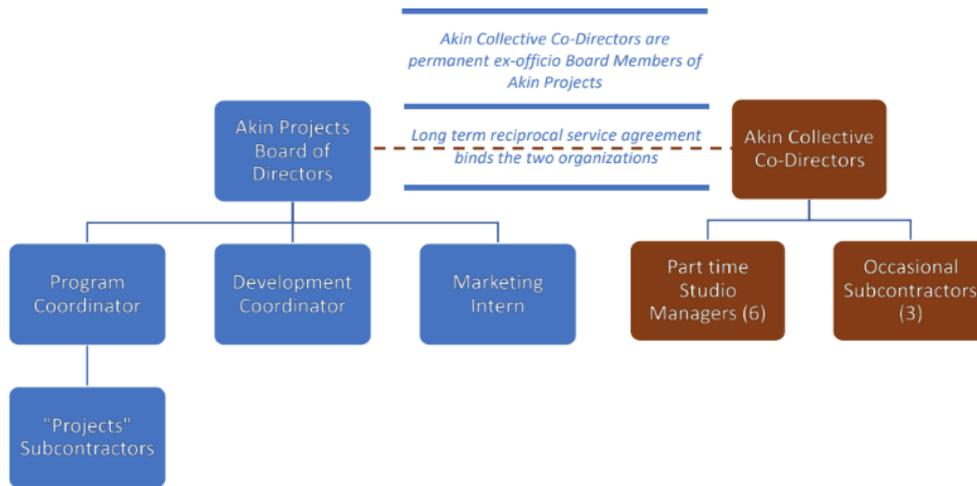


Figure 18: Akin's Organisational Chart ("Akin Collective", 2019)

Finding secure and affordable studio space has always been a challenge for Akin. Akin's studio spaces vary in location and quality, but are often older and short-term in lease. "We have an Akin that's in an old butcher shop... we have an Akin on the fourth floor of a museum at MOCA.. so they're in all sorts of different spaces" (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Aligning with Akin's ethos of partnership, they found that partnering with development companies was fruitful. "There are more developments going on in Toronto than anywhere else in North America" (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). According to service dominant logic, it is a win-win endeavour, as otherwise spaces are just "sitting there... doing absolutely nothing (but) costing money" and this way they can "cover some of the property tax" while housing artists (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Akin's hope is that through these partnerships it can provide less uncertainty for its members.

## Akin Staff #1

Akin Staff #1 is “in charge of” programming which means “launching everything, promoting it and making sure it works” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). They were recently hired to the role of marketing and programming coordinator, marking the first time that Akin has someone in this dedicated role. With experience as a studio manager at Akin and as a ceramicist selling and promoting their work, Akin Staff #1 brings experience in the field and knowledge of the organisation to this role.

“So Akin is technically two companies...we just call it Akin... . a blanket term that just kind of covers everything” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). At the time of this research Akin had “nine locations... in total we would have had 11, but we've had to close two in the last two years” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). The increasing cost of rentals in the city has led to the need for Akin to relocate artists and be adaptable. Whenever there is a studio closure, Akin tries to help artists “find other homes within the Akin community...prioritizing those members” for studio space to help with member retention (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Akin is transparent about the fact that they will have to relocate artists: “we will have a lease for, like, a year or two [usually] the shortest lease actually has been for six months...the longest one we've had is 3-5 years” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Unfortunately, Akin has lost members in the past despite its best efforts due to rising rent costs and the hassles of relocating.

Akin's shared studio model is based on finding affordable spaces, subdividing the space with plywood walls and inserting a basic shared kitchen. Studio space is rented out as either “shared” or “dedicated” studio spaces. Dedicated members rent studio space based on square footage on a month-to-month basis. Shared members

have access to a common table within the studio but do not have their own space in the studio to leave things. It is a cost effective option for those who are more mobile in their practice. Akin's studios house artists ranging from hobbyists, students, and emerging to established artists, and as such their need for studio space differs.

Akin encourages its members to show their art and grow their practice. The Remote Gallery came out of a member-driven need "to have a space for artists to exhibit in" and is provided to Akin members at a discounted rate (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). The Remote Gallery is a multipurpose gallery space that Akin "leases from the Toronto Arts Council who leases it from the city" (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Akin's programming sticks to three areas: *Creative* ("anything artsy and hands on"); *Community* ("something that encourages community building"); and *Forge* ("professional development") (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019).

Programming is set each season based on the success of previous events and members' needs. "Certain workshops we've done in the past that always have had a good turnout...*Show and Tell* and *Tax Writing* generally happen in the fall. *Art Crawls* are always popular so they happen each season" (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Professional development workshops focus on the "practical stuff that you don't necessarily learn in school" (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). The "information that's out there, but you don't always know where to look" workshops help to demystify this process and make it accessible to artists (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Akin tries to cover each area of its programming areas each season to help support its members.

Akin looks for cost-effective ways to advertise its undertakings. “So Akin at this point in time, we just market ourselves online for the most part...dipping our toes into, like, paid stuff, but not so much because we just don't have the funding for that” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Community partners, such as MOCA, the Artist Project, etc, often “help with promotion... sometimes giving space to host events” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). “On Facebook... we try to focus on stuff within our community...if we share the event link, people are more likely to click on it rather than just like a blurb” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Instagram is a popular platform for artists due to its visual nature. Akin hosts “Instagram takeovers” in which members can apply to “take over Akin’s Instagram account for 2-3 days” to help advertise their work, which is especially useful “when they have a show coming up” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Service dominant logic is in effect yet again as Akin’s brand awareness is being spread through the artist’s takeovers while the artist gets access to all of Akin’s followers.

Akin supports its artists by providing access to resources. Akin participates in *Toronto Art Council’s Newcomer Artist Grant* to mentor artists in the city who are new to Canada. Through this program there is funding “to go and learn, take workshops or do lectures or just to practice art together” (Akin Staff #1, personal communication, December 4, 2019). Over the years, Akin has developed a large network of artists in varying mediums and stages of artistic career. These types of mentorship programs help build Akin’s community of practice.

## **Akin Staff #2**

Akin Staff #2 is the operations manager at Akin and has been involved with the organisation since 2013. Originally joining as a member and a freelance illustrator, they started working for Akin in 2015 to supplement their income. As one of Akin's first studio managers, and early staff, they took on many roles. "I was doing the programming and Michael and I would plan it. I would coordinate it, I would host it...[and] do all the promotion" (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Over the years they have helped to draft policies, create logos and grow Akin. "Currently,...[as] the studio operations manager...my role is largely to do with supporting the studio management staff and everything going on at the studios. I head up conflict resolution... run the website...do all of our main communications;" in short, Akin Staff #2 is an integral piece of Akin's operations (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). It should be noted that Akin Staff #2 has had to leave Toronto due to the increasing cost of living and is now working for Akin remotely.

A benefit to joining Akin is the community support. Studio managers are trained in "courageous conversations, conflict resolution...[and] working with people with different mental health needs," as well as having a personal artistic practice (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). They create opportunities for members to "meet, to socialize, to network, to engage with each other" (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). As an artist you have to take on many roles, "you have to do the work, but you also have to be your own business manager, do your own marketing, buy your own supplies, be your own schedule keeper" (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). As a commercial artist, Akin Staff #2's educational training was unique in that they learned

business concepts as part of their program at Sheridan College, in a specialised program for illustration. In contrast, a lot of Akin artists come from OCAD, a renowned arts institution in Toronto, and are trained in fine art, meaning that they have training in technique rather than entrepreneurial endeavours.

Akin empowers its artists with experiential learning opportunities. An “added benefit of membership is that you get special calls for submission or opportunities for projects that other artists in the city don't get” (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). For example, in Winter 2020, Akin had a booth at the Artist Project and the call for submission was open to Akin members only. Another example is an exhibition that they put on in partnership with Steamwhistle Brewery and Neighborhood Arts Network in 2019. Steamwhistle Brewery provided space and Akin “provided an exhibition opportunity to 12 newcomer artists from Akin studios” (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Another example was the partnership with Akin and “a condo developer to have a mural painted on their boarding” (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). It was a win-win-win situation because Akin artists were able to be paid to create art, the developer was able to “show the community that they care, so they look good,” and Akin got paid for facilitating the project (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Akin is always looking for opportunities for its members to show work and help spread the Akin name. “At Akin we consider our members a resource...[and] use our people power for the benefit of the organization and for the members... giving opportunities for artists” (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Staff encourage artist initiatives from informal social gatherings to formal artist workshops or shows. The “MOCA crew has Wine Wednesdays...The Lansdowne

crew, they put on their own group show at Black Cat Gallery... called *Studiomates*" (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). An interesting learning model that Akin used to facilitate was *Skillshares*, which fell under the Forge category of professional development. The skillshare was focused on a topic, such as on documenting and archiving your work, and artists would meet and converse to share best practices. It was an "informal conversation... we didn't have an instructor...everybody who came contributed to that conversation" and truly reflected the communities of practice learning model (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

The problem with some of Akin's earlier initiatives is that they were not factored into the staffing costs. Out of financial necessity, Akin now only takes on programming for which it can break even or make a profit. Service dominant logic is seen in action especially in the tax workshop: "people find out about Artbooks and then they go there and hire them to do their taxes" (Akin Staff #2, personal communication, December 18, 2019). In general, Akin hosts programming and events that are engaging, relevant and affordable for its members.

### **Akin Staff #3**

Akin Staff #3 is a studio manager and programming assistant at Akin. Originally drawn to the organisation as an artist, they rented studio space in their Dufferin location starting in 2016 (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). At that time, Akin Staff #3 had made a switch from printmaking to ceramics and was in search of studio space with access to a kiln. Akin, studio mates encouraged Staff #3 to join the ceramic community, make their work look more professional and apply for ceramic-based art shows. "Becoming part of Akin's

community... was really essential to moving forward in my practice,” says Akin Staff #3, speaking to the informal learning that happens at Akin (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Aligning with social constructivist theory, this process “was very organic” and developed due to “working in close proximity to people...[There] were people who could talk with me about what it means to be working in ceramics, [and] not just on the technical side” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Communities of practice are common in the arts, with artists giving each other “advice on how much to charge, [and] which galleries to show with,” amongst other things (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019).

According to Staff #3, “in art school they don't tell you how to do life afterwards” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). This is the niche that Akin tries to fill. “There's the stereotype around artists being this individual genius without the need for support;” Akin works to dispel this myth (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Currently, Akin partners with Ontario College of Art and Design for their *Thesis Award* offered to their graduating students. This juried award provides the recipient with “about \$1,500 or \$2,000 worth of space” and, in so doing, access to the Akin community (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Finding studio space and an artist community are both important things for emerging artists and this award speaks to that. Learning happens “organically when your studio is next to somebody else's” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019).

Artists are “looking to expose their work, to engage with the public and to find communities” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Through its calls for submission and events, Akin provides experiential learning opportunities

to its members. For example, Akin has “rented a table at *Edition*,” which is “held in conjunction with Art Toronto, the leading art fair in Canada... It’s a really direct way that as an artist you can get exposure to people who are knowledgeable and [to] contemporary art collectors and gallery owners” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). “As Akin partners with larger institutions, the artists that participate with Akin get exposure,” such as in the MOCA residency where artists are able to meet the “curator and art director” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Akin has been in the MOCA for two years, housing over 30 artists there at a time. In the last cohort of the MOCA residency, “there were three people that I know who had work that was then picked up and started working with other galleries as a result” (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019).

#### **Akin Staff #4**

Akin Staff #4 works for Akin as a studio manager, programming assistant and administration assistant. Akin Staff #4 came to Akin with the desire to learn from its model of shared arts spaces and, in true Akin fashion, a quick partnership ensued. They started working for Akin in 2016: “I did a lot of admin stuff, like keeping track of the rent... paying people’s invoices, etc... [and then] started the studio managing [as well]” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). Although not an artist themselves, Akin Staff #4 is in the arts community. As a member of the Ontario board of CARFAC, they are passionate about advocating for artists. CARFAC, the Canadian Artists’ Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens, is a not-for-profit organisation that tries to “promote a socio-economic climate that is conducive to the production of visual arts in Canada” (CARFAC, 2020). CARFAC “has put a lot of money into research about how much would be an appropriate wage for different

tasks...and they publish it every year” to help set an industry standard in the arts (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). Like other arts organisations, Akin consults CARFAC rates to ensure that it is properly compensating artists.

Akin is constantly looking for partnerships to empower its members and provide opportunities. They used to do more collaborations with charities and community-based events, often hiring Akin artists to facilitate workshops. In the past, they worked with CAMH and the Ronald McDonald House to run art workshops with those communities. “It was great to employ the artists...some of them were very experienced and some of them had never run a workshop before” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). Despite the experiential learning potential, Akin ultimately cut back on such programming because of the staffing costs involved in running events.

Akin offers its members exhibition opportunities within their St. Clair and Dupont locations. There are vitrines, or small exhibition boxes, which are located in central areas in those studio spaces. The St. Clair vitrine is located at street level, giving artists more exposure to the public. Vitrine submissions are based on a waitlist rather than on a jury so it is an accessible way for Akin artists to present their work. Artists are at various stages in their career and “it can be demystifying to work around other artists at different levels of their career” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). This is one way in which Akin helps support its members in showing their work.

Akin studio managers often take on an informal mentoring role for their studio members. They often provide members with “lists of resources or would tell them about events” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). According

to Staff #4, “good studio managers put the artists before their own careers and want to see people succeed” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). They spoke to their experience as a studio manager and the joy they experienced by empowering their studio members to put on a group show. They provided “drafts, and calls for submissions...lists of galleries worth checking” -- in short, the resources required to undertake this initiative (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020). Although the studio members credit Staff #4, it was their own undertaking that created the show and the opportunity for shared celebration of creativity. This example yet again points to the community of practice at work in Akin’s shared studio model. “I’ve definitely seen...somebody making work and somebody else like, you should check out this gallery and you would really fit in there... I know the curator, I’ll introduce you...those aren’t things that you can promise but it happens” (Akin Staff #4, personal communication, January 27, 2020).

### **Enes Satir (Akin Member)**

As a new immigrant to Canada, Enes Satir really felt the embrace of Akin’s community. “A good friend” told her about this “studio space or these art people who are called Akin that support newcomer artists” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). She initially joined Akin’s community through its *Show and Tell* events and other social programming. Satir spoke of the open liberal nature of Akin and the atmosphere of acceptance and creativity that it fosters. “I feel like Akin has been a very vital part in my art process” in that it has let her open up creatively and explore new media and ideas (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). She credits Akin for helping her feel more settled in Toronto, sharing that “most of

the people that I know now, in one way or another, I knew through Akin” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020).

According to Enes, Akin’s studio space is “the sanctuary that you can go to....[to] forget about everything else” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). Having recently changed from a shared to a dedicated studio membership, she appreciates not having to clean up projects in progress and what having a studio signifies. “It just makes me put myself first as an artist” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). Being around other artists is empowering. “In this circle [of artists]...you have other people who are on the same page...struggling...so it makes it more real...[and] attainable” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). There are lots of opportunities for social interaction at Akin. Enes remarked how friendly her studiomates were: “they had this welcome letter for me... I felt like people actually wanted to get to know each other” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). Akin is “not just a place...that I’m just putting a table and working because I can do that anywhere... But this whole system...I guess it’s the feeling that you’re part of something” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). It is this ineffable quality that makes Akin work. “I feel supported as an artist...There’s always an opportunity created for you to show your work or to apply for something” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020).

Through the encouragement of Akin staff, she applied for and received funding from Toronto Arts Council’s *Newcomer and Refugee Artist Mentorship Program*. The grant provides funding to both the newcomer artist and the professional artist mentoring them to cover the cost of supplies and their time. Enes spoke to the experiential learning benefits that this mentorship provided. Self-defined

as “someone who is very difficult to teach” she traditionally does not “respond well to teachers” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). She and her mentor met once or twice a week to do work and share tips. “It’s not a class; it’s just like she’s working and she’s letting me know how to do this thing...doesn’t have the heavy feeling of being taught” but rather friends working together (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). This mentorship “encouraged me to step out” of her comfort zone and “now I’m experimenting with other things that I know if I was in Sudan I was never going to touch” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). Although the formal mentorship lasted for only a year, the two instantly clicked and are now close friends. “It didn’t end with the mentorship program because we were actually genuinely enjoying it...so we still hang out. We still do ceramics. I still call her when I don’t know what to do about something” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020).

It was through her mentorship experience and her development in her artistic career that Enes decided to start to sell her work in local art fairs. In tandem with the development of her medium, she started focusing her efforts on the business side of her practice. “It is a learning experience in... interacting with people...I see people...inviting people in... people come to your table shyly and you’re supposed to encourage them” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). However she was conflicted with this new path. There is a lot of work that is involved in the “business side” of one’s art practice and it was hard for her to juggle with a full-time job, “including putting things on Instagram...on Etsy, to communicate with people to go and ship the stuff” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). As well, she found that she was taking fewer risks artistically as she was reproducing items that people have responded well to. “Maybe when you reach the thing that you really

do what you really love, then you go ahead and market it. But until I have time to do both, I cannot put all of the time into marketing” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). For now she is content to focus on making art and developing her artistic practice.

Professional development and nontraditional learning have been a big part of her growth as an artist. Unable to take part in the *Forge* series workshops due to the timing conflicts with her work, she sought out professional development through *Skillshare*. *Skillshare* is “not an actual course” but a “platform that people” use to share information (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). At this point in her career, she is hoping for “workshops that are more about how to do an introductory towards an art form” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). She believes that Akin, as “a collective that has so many people...[would] be cool if every artist from a different background can do a workshop” (E. Satir, personal communication, January 25, 2020). Aligning with Akin Staff #2’s *Skillshare* initiative, it seems that knowledge sharing is a concept that is embraced by staff and members alike.

### **Nicole Crozier (Akin Member)**

Nicole Crozier, an Akin Ossington studio member, is able to speak to art studio space rental in Toronto. Renting studio space is important to Nicole, who claims that she “need[s] to have a separate space” in order to help with her productivity (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020). Before renting with Akin, she started at the *Coin and Coffin Studios*, which has since been turned into condos. When deciding to join Akin, the “communal aspect” of Akin’s studios and the ability to “build a network...was definitely the biggest draw” (N. Crozier,

personal communication, January 28, 2020). “As somebody who's mostly a painter, that form of art-making can be very isolating” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020). It helped that the studio space was in a convenient location, which allowed her to spend more time on her practice rather than commuting. “Also they cover insurance, which is unheard of...just knowing that if something happens...I could qualify to get some of those lost items paid for ...that's huge ” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020).

“I just see it as my second job...I try to meet certain production targets...and actively apply for shows” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020). Nicole can attest to the experiential learning opportunities that Akin has provided her. This past fall she had her work displayed in their vitrines. “That was a really great experience... they have these two vitrine boxes...the Dupont location faces some weird interior corridor that not that many people see... [so it's] a great way of just testing something out first before bringing it to the other location [on St. Clair] where it faces the street” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020). According to Nicole it was a pressure-free way to show work. “I think that's great... that they offer a lot of opportunities for artists... I get emails from..studio managers... like check out this call for submissions” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020).

Nicole is hoping for more programming on the social side of Akin's community. “It can be hard to build new friendships with artists because we can be weird or awkward” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020). More opportunities for artists in the same building to interact would be beneficial to building the communities of practice. For example, “it would be awesome if we did an Akin Ossington... open house where the public could come through” (N. Crozier, personal

communication, January 28, 2020). Not only would that provide an experiential learning opportunity but it would also allow members to meet other artists in the building. “Overall,” Akin is “filling an important role that no other organization is filling in Toronto right now...providing professional development opportunities to artists” (N. Crozier, personal communication, January 28, 2020).

## **Interview Findings**

Community, insider information and experiential learning were raised many times as major benefits of Akin’s membership. Accessing a community of artists is essential for professional development, according to Social Constructivist Theory. Shared studio space is more supportive of artistic growth due to communities of practice. “There’s a substantial benefit...for your mental health to get out of your living space and go somewhere to work” (M. Dellios, personal communication, December 3, 2019). Time and again my research found informal learning being facilitated through the shared studio space model. Having the support of Akin staff allowed members to access resources and opportunities that they would not otherwise have had.

Akin provides experiential learning opportunities to its members in order to help them develop their entrepreneurial skill set. Art entrepreneurs need to develop marketing, accounting and sales skills in order to run their sole proprietorship. Akin empowers its members by providing relevant programming and workshops. For example, Akin’s instagram artist takeover allows members to think consciously about how they are presenting themselves online. “You have a few choices on what your Instagram is to look like” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Akin’s *Taxes for Creatives* and *Grant Writing* workshops help to address the

accounting side of the arts entrepreneur's practice. Akin's arts fairs, call for submissions, group shows and open houses all address the artist's need to be able to showcase and sell their work.

## CHAPTER 7

### Conclusion

“More financial literacy [is needed]...specifically in art school and how it relates to the art world” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). According to Vickers, Akin Collective Co-Executive, “the dropout rate for people coming out of art school is quite significant because there aren't enough supports out there” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Akin serves a niche in Toronto, providing artists with relevant programming and experiential learning opportunities. My research found that the modern artist often has to take on additional source(s) of employment in order to support their practice. It is no longer the stereotypical starving artist, who is solely dedicated to their art. “The reality is [that] your neighbor who is a dentist that loves to sketch is an artist and your aunt who weaves is an artist” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Sharing studio space allows for decreased barriers to entry by reducing the costs. As well, shared space allows for social interaction and informal learning with other creatives. Akin’s *Show and Tell* events are one example of this type of learning and the community of practice at play. At these events artists get feedback from their peers as well as tips/techniques. Akin’s *Art Crawls* are a great example of the social nature of Akin’s events within the context of professional development and networking opportunities. Akin’s community-building initiatives help to dispel the myth of the lonely artist.

Akin’s mission is to provide affordable studio space and relevant programming. “Toronto vital statistics... from the 2016 census documented... [that] art workers... are paid significantly less [in Toronto] than art workers in the rest of

Canada” despite the higher cost of living (Akin Staff #3, personal communication, November 10, 2019). Aligning with that research, Akin’s 2018 demographic study found that “about 40% of its members are living at or below the poverty line” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). Partnering with larger organisations such as MOCA, CAMH, or the Artist Project has allowed Akin to keep its programming affordable. Leveraging Service Dominant Logic, Akin introduces its members to these organisations, and in return these organisations offer Akin specialized knowledge or funding. Working with developers, Akin tries to find locations that are unused or undervalued to transform into shared studio spaces. It is these initiatives and an adaptable mindset that have allowed Akin to endure the test of time. As a newly formed non-profit, Akin Projects stands to benefit from the ability to apply for funding to keep programming accessible to its members.

Experiential learning is paramount when acquiring entrepreneurial skills. It is a daunting process to share your art with the world. Akin’s model of alternative education provides artists with supportive opportunities to show and sell their work. Artists develop a greater knowledge of marketing, sales, branding and their online presence. In a sense Akin staff act as personal trainers, providing opportunities for artists to feel supported as they build skills and confidence. Akin’s calls for submissions and art fairs allow artists to tone their sales and marketing muscles. Their *Open Studio* events allow artists to show their work as well as develop their sales pitch. “Successful artists can be thought of as brand managers actively engaged in developing, nurturing and promoting themselves as recognizable products” (Schroeder, 2005). It is the artist’s brand that adds value to works of art and sets the price of their market worth. *Artist Takeovers* is one such way that Akin empowers its artists to build their brand. Giving access to Akin’s account on

Instagram allows its members to practice presenting their work on a larger scale. In short, Akin is working on an ongoing basis to provide opportunities for its membership to develop arts entrepreneurship skills in unique and engaging ways. This research uncovered the importance of community, partnership, experiential learning, affordability and mentorship in arts entrepreneurship education.

### **Limitations of the Study**

An in-depth, holistic view of Akin was undertaken in this research. I interviewed 4 Akin staff, 2 Akin executives, 2 guest speakers and 2 artists to get different perspectives on Akin's operations. However, interviewing more of Akin's membership and a wider range of artists at various stages of their careers would provide additional insight and information. With approximately 400 members, a greater sample size will bring more insight into the various needs in the artistic community. An artist's identity or development as a hobbyist, emerging, mid-career, or established voice would change their need for support and professional development.

It should be noted that this research takes place in a snapshot of time. It is focused on the Toronto art world and Akin's Winter 2020 programming. Since beginning this research there has been a global pandemic that has affected both Akin's operations and the world at large. At the time of this paper, Akin has already had to alter the programming such that it is now delivered solely online. As culture workers have been greatly affected by the ripple effects of COVID-19, I would be interested to see the long-term effects on the arts.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

Future arts entrepreneurship research would benefit from exploring various types of arts institutes, as well as looking at how arts entrepreneurship education is being addressed at the post-secondary level. Collectives, university-affiliated organisations, incubators and career development models all go about arts entrepreneurship education in slightly different ways. A Canada-wide investigation into arts entrepreneurship would give an interesting perspective on current local trends in the field. Additionally, focusing on urban centers and art capitals of the world such as New York, London, Paris, Berlin, etc. might lead to more robust research of best practices. Knowing how to best support artists at various stages of their careers and professional development is important in order to develop effective programming. In particular, I am interested in investigating models that incorporate formal mentorship support in their portfolio.

## **Implications for the Arts and Arts Education**

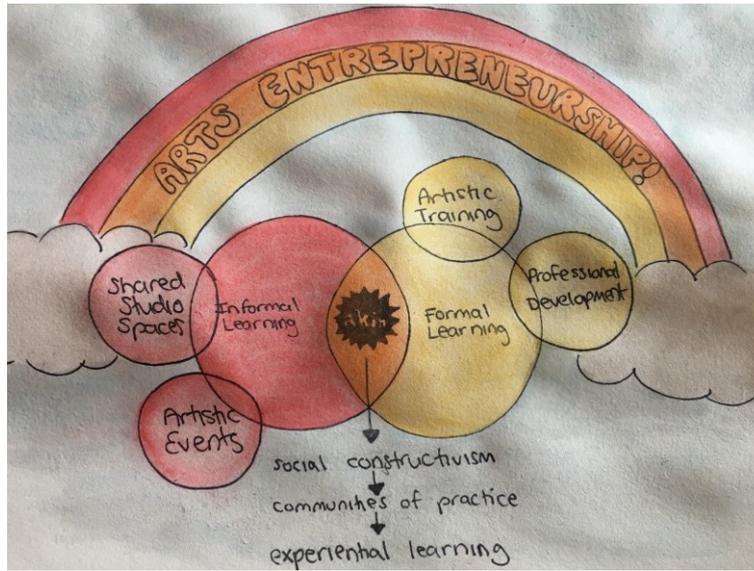


Figure 19: Akin's Model of Arts Entrepreneurship Education

Akin's model of arts entrepreneurship involves a combination of formal and informal learning (see figure 19). Applying Social Constructivist Logic, Akin has created a community of learners through its shared spaces. Working in proximity to other creatives leads to conversation and collaboration. By creating opportunities for networking through communal artistic events, Akin enables informal learning. Its workshops and professional development events allow for formal learning possibilities. Akin continues to partner with other arts organizations in order to help support artists. With a focus on "more on our relationships with schools," Akin is embarking on supporting recent grads in their transition into the art world, stating that it "benefits the school...[when their grads are] successful" (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019). An enhanced focus on skill sharing, mentoring and medium-specific workshops would further support its communities of practice and help Akin grow.

There needs to be more support for the arts in Toronto in order to enable shared artistic spaces to continue. Akin is doing its part in terms of creating a culture of sharing. It is mentoring "a small group of artists that want to create an art studio in Barrie...giving them the playbook on how to do it...like little things that we've learned

along the way” (M. Vickers, personal communication, November 7, 2019).

Grassroots organizations like Akin need more operational funding and government support in order to stay afloat. Subsidising artistic work spaces would help keep our city vibrant and create a culture of creativity. It is the arts and culture in Toronto that bring tourism into the city and supports the local economy. Supporting the arts just makes financial sense.

The world of arts education can learn from Akin by incorporating more entrepreneurship in the curriculum. Providing experiential learning opportunities is formative for students and integral for artists. It is through hands-on learning that one is able to develop confidence. Encouraging students to show their work is key to their artistic development. The internet “provides visual artists with an opportunity to directly communicate their art in a global context... without going through gatekeepers such as art critics, publishers and galleries” (Hansson, 2015). In a sense, technology levels the playing ground for emerging artists. As such, arts educators need to teach digital literacy and online branding. Digital literacy is defined as not only “having the right education to be able to navigate cultural codes online, but also to be able to connect to the right social network” (Hansson, 2015). As educators, we regularly curate curriculum and translate information to make it more accessible to our students. This research shows the importance of empowering our students to show their work and take risks.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval



### CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant: Ruth Bretholz  
Department: Faculty of Fine Arts \ Art Education  
Agency: N/A  
Title of Project: Arts Entrepreneurship: Assessing Educational Strategies in a Canadian Context  
Certification Number: 30011855

Valid From: October 24, 2019 To: October 23, 2020

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard DeMont".

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Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

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## Appendix B: Recruitment Letter



### **PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH STUDY: ARTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED SPACES**

**Researcher:** Ruth Bretholz

**Researcher's Contact Information:** 416-525-7672 or [rbretholz@hotmail.com](mailto:rbretholz@hotmail.com)

**Faculty Supervisors:** Dr. Lorrie Blair and Dr. David Pariser

**Faculty Supervisors' Contact Information:** (514)848-2424 ext 4646, [lorrie.blair@concordia.ca](mailto:lorrie.blair@concordia.ca) and [david.pariser@concordia.ca](mailto:david.pariser@concordia.ca)

*You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This letter provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.*

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

As my masters thesis research, I will be examining practices in the field of arts entrepreneurship education. Specifically an indepth look into the work being done through Akin Collective and its sister organization Akin Projects will be explored. Preliminary research has shown that mentorship and community are important factors for an artist's success. As such, this research will focus on the programming and informal learning which is taking place.

#### **REQUIREMENTS OF THE STUDY**

Participants will be asked to take part in an interview that will last approximately one hour in length. If possible, the interview will take place at one of the Akin Collective locations. All information will be confidential and participants will decide how they want to be identified in the publication of these findings.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to read this document. Attached please find an ethics release form which you would need to sign in order to take part in this study. If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact [rbretholz@hotmail.com](mailto:rbretholz@hotmail.com) or 416-525-7672.

Sincerely,  
*Ruth Bretholz*

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## Appendix C: Interview Questions

### **Staff/Member Questions\***

- What is your involvement in the Akin Collective?
- How long have you been involved with Akin and what initially brought you to them?
- **What kind of funding/costs are associated with being involved with Akin?**  
How do you fund/rationalise these costs?
- What kind of new skills/things have you **learned/taught** through Akin?
- Have you **run**/taken part in any of their programming/workshops? If so, which? If not, why not?
- **How does Akin decide which programs to offer?** How do you decide which programs to go to?
- Are there any mentorship programs/opportunities that are being offered through Akin?
- How has the Akin community helped/changed you/your practice?

\*specific questions were catered to the role that each interviewee played within Akin and their respective experiences

## **Appendix D: Akin Member Survey Questions**

*Out of respect for Akin's intellectual property below is an abridged version of the Winter 2020 survey with questions that pertain to my research specifically.*

**1.**

Which of the following describes your involvement in Akin? (Check all that apply)

- I'm an Akin studio member
- I used to be an Akin studio member
- I attend Akin's programming and events
- I'm employed with Akin
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**2.**

For how long have you been involved (in any way) with Akin?

- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-4 years
- Over 5 years
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**3.**

Which most accurately describes your age range?

- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-65
- 65+

What type of artwork are you involved in? (Check all that apply)

- Painting
- Illustration
- Sculpture
- Fashion
- Jewellery
- Design
- Printmaking
- Writing
- Mixed media
- Digital media
- Filmmaking
- Performance
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**4.**

---

What category currently best describes your artistic career?

- Hobbyist
- Emerging Artist
- Mid-career Artist
- Established Artist

**5.**

---

Which option best describes your level of artistic training?

- I am self-taught
- I have taken art courses at the secondary level
- I have taken medium-specific workshops
- I have taken art courses at the post secondary level
- I have an undergraduate degree in art
- I have a graduate degree in art
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**6.**

---

How has your participation with Akin influenced your art practice? (Check all that apply)

- The studio spaces give me a place to work that I can afford
- I am inspired by other Akin artists
- I am made aware of more opportunities to show my work
- I get feedback on my work
- I have learned new skills
- I feel supported in my practice
- I feel more connected to the artist community in Toronto
- I feel a sense of community with other Akin members
- I have been able to further develop my artistic practice
- Akin has increased the opportunities to show my work
- Akin has helped improve my ability to make income from my art
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**7.**

---

If you're willing to provide more detail on how Akin has helped you develop your art practice we would love to hear it :)

Are there any barriers that prevent you from accessing the facilities and events at Akin? We are asking in a broad sense, examples could include physical barriers, language barriers, financial barriers, intimidation, scheduling, etc.

**8.**

---

If you have your studio space at Akin, what were the reasons why you chose Akin? (Check all that apply)

- Affordability
- Location
- Community
- Facilities
- Mentoring
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**9.**

---

If you rent studio space, why is having a studio important to you? (Check all that apply)

- Inspiration from other artists
- No space to create at home
- Able to make the kinds of work I could not at home (messy, etc)
- Quiet space
- Able to work on various projects
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**10.**

---

If you rent studio space at Akin, which type of membership do you currently have?

- I am a Dedicated studio member
- I am a Shared studio member

**11.**

---

If you rent studio space, which location do you primarily work from?

- Akin Dupont
- Akin Lakeshore
- Akin Ossington
- Akin Richmond
- Akin River
- Akin St Clair
- Akin Studio Program at MOCA
- Akin Sunrise
- Akin X Collision Residency at Commerce Court
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**12.**

---

If you have worked in Akin's studios, how do/did you feel when you're in the studio?

- Happy
- Inspired
- Motivated
- Tranquil
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**13.**

---

If you are a studio member what would make your membership more valuable (check all that apply)

- Access to more work space
- Mentorship
- More social events
- More programming
- Larger social space
- Additional storage
- Shared resources or tools
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

14.

---

Is Akin a mentoring environment? (Check all that apply)

- Yes, I get feedback on my work
- Yes, I learn about art opportunities to apply to
- Yes, I have a mentor who I ask for advice
- Yes, I learn tricks and artistic techniques
- Yes, I love attending Akin workshops
- No, I do not feel mentored
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15.

---

What are your artistic goals for the coming year? (Check all that apply)

- I don't have any set goals
- I want to produce more work
- I want to exhibit my work
- I want to learn new skills
- I want to get more involved in the artistic community
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

16.

---

What can Akin do or improve upon to help you achieve your artistic goals? We welcome any advice or suggestions about how Akin can improve.

17.

---

In terms of studio space what do you wish Akin offered you?

18.

---

Which of Akin's workshops have you taken part in? (Check all that apply)

- Taxes for Artists and Creatives
  - Grant Writing
  - Tenant's Rights
  - Anti-Oppression for Artists and Cultural Producers
  - None
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

19.

Which of Akin's events have you taken part in? (Check all that apply)

- Art Crawl
  - Show and Tell
  - Studio Parties
  - Card Making
  - None
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

20.

How many Akin workshops/events have you attended in the past year?

- None
  - 1-2
  - 2-3
  - 3-4
  - 5 or more
  - Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 

21.

If you have attended workshops/events how would you rate them overall?

- |          |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |         |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------|
|          | 1                     | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     |         |
| Horrible | <input type="radio"/> | Amazing |
- 

22.

If you have attended workshops/events which of the following apply? (Check all that apply)

- Interesting
- Boring
- Helpful
- Not helpful
- Too long
- Reasonably priced
- Too expensive
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**23.**

---

Please briefly explain your selections in the above 2 questions and include any suggestions that you may have for Akin's programming:

Your answer \_\_\_\_\_

---

If you have not participated in workshops/events why not? (Check all that apply)

- Time of the events/workshop
- They are not relevant to me
- I'm too busy
- Costs associated with events/workshop
- They do not seem fun or entertaining
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**24.**

---

When would be the best time(s) to offer workshops/events?

- Weekday evenings
- Weekday during the day
- Weekends during the day
- Weekend evenings
- No preference
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**25.**

---

What about the length of the workshops?

- The shorter the better, one hour max
- Two to three hours
- I would be interested in a half day workshop
- I would be interested in a full day workshop
- I would be interested in workshops that take place over an entire weekend
- I would be interested in workshops that take place over several weeks (for example, 2hrs every thursday for 4 weeks)
- No preference
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**26.**

---

Is there an organisation, gallery, institution that you would like to see Akin partner with or collaborate with? Why?

**27.**

---

Have you shown your work with Akin? (Check all that apply)

- Yes, I've used Akin's Remote Gallery
- Yes, I've applied to exhibit in Akin's Vitrine Galleries
- I participated in the Artist Project with Akin
- Yes, I worked on a public art project in partnership with Akin
- Yes, I've participated in some of Akin's calls for submissions
- No, not yet
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**28.**

---

If you have not shown your work with Akin why not? (Check all that apply)

- Too busy
- Too expensive
- I applied but was not accepted
- Too much paperwork
- I am not interested
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**29.**

---

Would you recommend Akin to other creatives? If you answer yes, we'd love any help that you can give in spreading the word to help us become the viable and sustainable organization that we aspire to :)

Yes

No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**30.**

Please elaborate on the reasoning for your answer above.

---

We're so grateful for your time and insights and are excited to work through everyone's responses to this survey in order to figure out ways to better serve you and other artists in Toronto. If there is anything else you'd like to share with us (including constructive criticism) we'd love to hear it?

**31.**

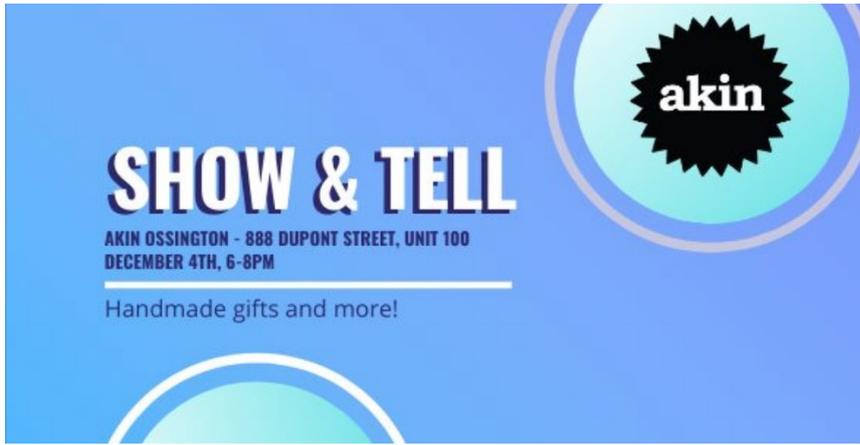
## Appendix E: Akin's Marketing of Its Events



### Marketing for the Taxes Workshop



### Marketing for the Tenants' Rights Workshop



Marketing for Show and Tell Event at Akin Ossington



Marketing for Show and Tell Event at Akin Sunrise



Marketing for the Closing Party of the Lansdowne Studios



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Marketing for Akin at the Artist Project