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Special Ops
Frugal artists flock to OfficeOps’ affordable studios

By Joshua M. Bernstein

Deep in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn (now known to hipsters as East Williamsburg), amid cement factories and meat distributors, seven friends have launched a creative revolution. Behind a rusty, unmarked door sits OfficeOps, a community-arts, office and cultural center that provides artists and nonprofits with inexpensive work space and production services such as darkrooms and webcasting. Its founders’ mission is simple: “We want to bring a group of people together who can produce work,” says Kevin Lindamood, one of OfficeOps’ seven principal partners.

In 2000, while living in a factory-to-loft conversion in Bushwick, he crossed paths with local property owner Samuel Friedmann, who admired the renovations Lindamood had made to his loft. Friedmann enlisted Lindamood, along with six crafty friends—Jennifer Grogan, Todd Grogan, Dylan Taylor, Michael French, Michael Radosta and Eamonn Farrell—to help him rehabilitate a nearby vacant former knitting factory that he owned. He brought usa bottle of whiskey and blueprints and said, “Let's get this going,” Lindamood recalls.

The group began by importing truckloads of kitschy salvage, including lockers, roller skates, pinball machines and cigarette vending machines. Initially, they were simply having fun remodeling the 15,000-square-foot blank canvas, but as their work progressed, they realized it was the ideal site for a community resource center.

They pitched the idea to Friedmann, who agreed and made them managing partners of the facility, which houses kitchens, studios, a radio transmitter, a mail room and a 3,000-square-foot hardwood floor on which bands rock and skating parties roll. An adjacent floor offers DSL-equipped offices and studios renting for $2 per square foot monthly—a steal compared with the Soho prices.

Duchardt says the event’s success is largely owed to OfficeOps’ generosity. “If you don’t have a lot of money, they’ll work with you,” she adds—even if you have no money.

In an effort to present affordable yoga classes—and to attract a new clientele—OfficeOps contacted yoga instructor Delynn Hall and offered her a free classroom. The plan worked. Hall charged just $2 per session, thus opening yoga to a steady class of nearly a dozen OfficeOps newbies. “A huge dance studio is prime,” Hall says. “[OfficeOps] willingness to support an endeavor is unparalleled.”

Still, not everyone has been pleased with OfficeOps unconventional business methods. One tenant, RoofTop Films, headquartered at OfficeOps last year, recently quit...