

Fenway Studios Expands with Affordable studio, gallery space

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By Seth Daniel

Breaking into a brand new mission, and doing their part to address the shortage of artist studio space in the city, Fenway Studios announced this week that it has recently added five new artist workspaces and a new gallery space in its historic artist community.

The genesis of the plan came to be when a long-time member of the live/work community in

the Fenway Studios vacated his basement space three years ago, and the building began to think what they might be able to do with the space to serve the greater community. While COVID-19 stalled some of the planning, Fenway Studios and the Friends of Fenway Studios was able to jump-start the process, create five new work-spaces (they cannot be lived in), and a new gallery space that can also serve as a place to hold seminars or classes.

Beverly Sky, an fibre artist in the building that is managing the spaces, said they took applications for the space and found some wonderful new artists for which they can offer the space at a deep discount.

“Once COVID-19 happened, we looked to re-organize the effort and have separate studio spaces,” she said. “We re-de-

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signed the space and created five new artist spaces that can be rented out to working artists at affordable rates, rates that are comparable to what the BCA is charging and other non-profit arts organizations are charging for square foot space...We now have all five studios occupied by illustrators, painters and other 2-D artists.”



Illustrator Eli Portman is one of the new artists to rent space at the new Fenway Studios artist workspace. The historic artist building created five new workspaces and a new gallery space in the basement of the building. Portman said the studio space situation in Boston is very difficult.

Friends President Vcevy Strekalovsky said it is a major change at the building.

“It’s a big deal and a big change in mission for the heretofore private co-op studio units,” he said. “Our interest is in preserving an iconic and historic building, which no one in the city knows about... We realized there had to be a community aspect. What’s significant about the establishment of the new community space is the co-op has dedicated these spaces for community use – rental spaces and places for outside artists and space where you could hold classes and workshops. You can have gallery space now open to diverse groups all over the city that wouldn’t have an opportunity in this location to have affordable space...There is such a need for affordable space.”

One of the new artists is illustrator Eli Portman, who said he couldn’t be happier with the space, noting that it’s the first time he’s been able to have a studio in Boston proper.

“I’ve been through a number of studios and have been looking for something more long-term

because the studio situation in Boston is impossible,” he said. “It’s actually my first studio in Boston proper and close to downtown. I have enjoyed having the light here. My last studio had no windows and it’s great to have the light – which was a requirement for any new studio I chose.”

Another artist, Michelle Fawcett, had a great back-story to landing at Fenway Studios.

Sky said when the applications opened, she got a call from Fawcett’s husband who had been encouraging his wife to pursue her art full-time, but she had never made the jump.

“When I asked if he was the artist, he said that his wife was the artist and this was going to be her anniversary present,” said Sky. “He hoped to get her a studio so she could really commit to her artistry. I thought that was such a wonderful story.”

Said Fawcett, “Everyone is re-thinking right now what they’re doing with their lives. I’ve always dabbled in art, but never committed fully with space and time.”

Now, she is working full-time



Artist Michelle Fawcett got her new studio space as an anniversary gift from her husband, who was encouraging her to delve into her art full-time.

in her studio space on her latest interest, cyanotype prints – which are of great interest in the market and she has already sold many of them.

Sky said they had hoped to have more artists of color apply and get the spaces, but had only two applications and neither of them qualified under the rules.

The gallery space is a second piece of the expansion, and while right now it is hosting an internal show of the artists in the building, they hope to expand it out-

ward as well.

Strekalovsky said the gallery space is something that can benefit many different partners they have – including the Boston Arts Academy, Copley Society and other new friends.

“It really allows us the opportunity to tell people we’re here and doing something important for the city,” he said.

Said Sky, “We really hope to fulfill a need in the Fenway area and in Boston to support up-and-coming artists.”