NEW SPACE IN BRIGHTON

A new space for lens-based artists is being planned for Brighton & Hove. Founded by Simon Roberts and Nina Emett, it is intended that POST will house artist studios, a community darkroom, a daylight film & photography studio, an exhibition space and a reference library. A premises has been secured for the project and funds have been raised for its initial renovation.

POST will be located in Industrial House near Hove train station, owned by Brighton & Hove City Council. A 3,000 sq/ft industrial unit has been secured on a standard rolling 3-year lease.

According to its founders, POST will be meeting a significant need in the area. 'In recent years there has been a huge rise in demand for affordable studio space in Brighton & Hove among artists of all ages. This is due to a combination of spiralling rents, redevelopment of industrial units into apartments and the overall cost-of-living crisis,' they told *Source*.

Roberts and Emett also cite the forthcoming closure of New England House – one of the largest providers of artist studios in the city – as compounding this existing need. Also council owned, occupants have been told they will have to vacate by the end of September due to fire risks.

As well as a lack of affordable studio space there is also a 'lack of sharing' and interconnectivity among artists and organisations in the area (noted, as Roberts points out, in the report *Space for Culture* 2023). This is something else that they hope that POST will help alleviate. 'Our aim, in some small way, is to contribute to a turnaround in the fortunes of arts provision in the city from the grass-roots up because anything else will just take too long.'

Nina Emett and Simon Roberts

Industrial House near Hove train station, premises of POST

Unit 9, Industrial House, premises of POST

A Kickstarter campaign launched at the beginning of July reached its target of £25,000 in the same month. The campaign is ongoing and further funds raised will be put toward upgrading the premises' specification and creating a residency fund.

After this, revenue will be generated through fixed office rent, monthly membership to the darkroom and studio spaces, rental of the photographic studio and gallery, and a programme of workshops. It is anticipated that funding will be sourced through a mix of trading, sponsorship and grants in the future.

Roberts and Emett had been discussing founding a new arts space in the city for several years. Both lens-based artists, they come to the project 'as friends and colleagues'. Emett founded the non-profit FotoDocument in 2012 where Roberts is now a fellow Director. They also collaborated on the archive of the late Marilyn Stafford and the subsequent book and award. They cite 50 years of experience in photography between them.

They have found inspiration in places like Kindred Studios and Photofusion in London, Flatland Projects in Bexhill, St. Anne's House in Bristol and PrimeYark in Great Yarmouth. 'However, we've also added in our own unique elements like aiming to create a "biophilic" space (one that works in harmony with nature).'

Roberts and Emett point out that POST will be the only centre of this sort dedicated to photography in Brighton, as acknowledged by Martin Parr in a statement of support for the project: 'Given that Brighton must have the greatest number of photographers after London, I find it astonishing that there has never been an active photography-related centre with a gallery, library and place for photographers to meet.'

POST will be the new home of the Brighton organisation Photoworks (founded 1995), who will be a key anchor tenant with their own office space and access to the other facilities. 'At present they are in a small, central Brighton office with no additional space to run some of their own programming. So, we believe this will be an exciting and mutually beneficial relationship.'

Building work is due to begin in August 2025, followed by a soft launch in October 2025, and a full programme launch is intended for November 2026.

– Susanna Galbraith