

About Patricia Sutcliffe

The Founder of The Art House

Patricia Sutcliffe was an artist and the founder of The Art House.

The Art House began in 1994. It originally was based at Dean Clough, a series of mills and studios in Halifax.

In 2005 The Art House moved to Wakefield.

In the early days, back in 1994, The Art House was just an idea. The idea was to create an accessible place for disabled artists to work alongside other artists

This vision was shared by a group of individuals, led by Patricia. She saw a better future for arts inclusively.

Patricia had the determination and drive to create studio spaces that were physically accessible and adaptable for as many artists as possible.

The Disability Discrimination Act did not begin until the following year, in 1995.

Patricia's way of thinking marked an incredibly important time to help make a change and a shift in the arts.

Patricia was a sculptor who completed a Fine Art degree in 1993 at Bradford College.

She was a wheelchair user and sufferer of severe arthritis. During her art studies, she had to work from a loading bay. She was asked to leave the space during deliveries. She also had to travel to the local library to use the bathroom facilities.

After graduating, her friends and fellow creatives moved into local artists' studios, many of which were in old mills or former industrial buildings.

These buildings were not accessible to Patricia. She also lost her important access to technician support after her studies ended

Patricia discovered that the type of facilities she needed to continue her art making practice did not exist.

She quickly became frustrated by the lack of support and that nowhere had wheelchair-friendly studio spaces.

There is a newspaper article in the Halifax Courier voicing her frustrations. This resulted in a small group of artists coming together to find a way to help Patricia and other people

At their first meeting to explore solutions, The Art House was officially formed. It created core aims to build and provide a space for disabled and non-disabled artists to work alongside one another.

Building an accessible space became the original aim. This was the main goal to form the new organisation.

The Art House began in Halifax after Patricia got an office space in Dean Clough galleries to begin running creative workshops.

What started as a small group of artists looking for a space, became a national membership organisation that helped all artists to have access to work, and opportunities.

At the peak of The Art House, it had a membership of 250 disabled and non-disabled artists working alongside each other.

Between 1994–2004, Patricia and a small group of artists and people working in the arts worked hard to secure funding for art projects, training events and artists' residencies across Yorkshire and the Midlands.

The Art House existed then, very similar to how it does today. But back then, it did not have a physical building.

In 1997 The Art House became a registered charity. Patricia and the team received funding to begin research into what kind of building they wanted to build.

Many potential locations were discussed, but Wakefield became an important city for consideration. Wakefield already had other important visual arts organisations in the city, such as Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

In November 2004, Wakefield Council gave permission to begin building on the location it is now. By February 2007 the construction work started.

On 4 June 2008, The Art House moved into the new building.

After almost 15 years, The Art House opened its brand-new space. It was centrally located in the city and positioned by the rail station.

It was leading in terms of physical accessibility. It offered artist studios, accommodation, meeting rooms and community spaces.

Patricia's original ambition and vision finally became real.

Patricia was an artist who mainly worked with stoneware ceramics and mixed media.

She often created clay sculptures based on the human figure and the landscape. Her works have little surface colour. She uses a lot of texture and surface patterns.

Patricia Sutcliffe sadly passed away in 2016.

She always had a strong belief that art should be accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

This idea still remains important to The Art House's values.

The Art House will forever remember and support Patricia's passion. It will always support the commitment she showed to supporting the development of all artists, especially those who face barriers.



This is a photograph of Patricia Sutcliffe with one of her sculptures