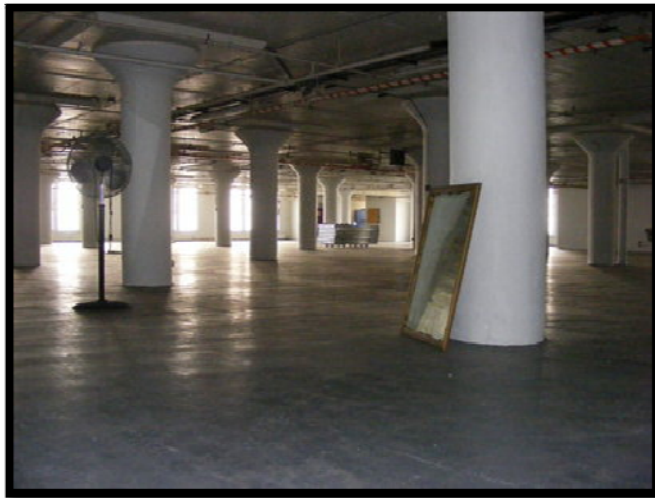


Brooklyn artists find an affordable home

by Gidon Belmaker
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For Brooklyn artist Monika Zerzeczna, finding time to develop her art - and the funds to pay for it - were not easy tasks. "I found myself working so many side jobs, just to afford a studio place," she said.

Zerzeczna said renting a studio at the Brooklyn Army Terminal helped her advance her work in new directions. She is not the only one. The project has been so successful, more space is being set up to make room for all of the artists requesting studios at the Bay Ridge site.

The studios are sponsored by the city and operated by Chashama, a not-for-profit that connects artists with vacant real estate at subsidized rates. At the art terminal, the group is setting up an additional 60,000 square feet of affordable space for more than new 75 artists.

The studios-to-be on a large, open floor are still a work in progress. Bright sunlight shines through tall windows; dividers are stacked up in piles, waiting to be set up to create private studios.

Artists elsewhere in the building say the atmosphere has a lasting impression on their art.

"It made my work bigger," said Kristin Reed. (The waterfront nearby was also an inspiration: Reed curated a 12-person show at the terminal last year titled "The Water's Edge.")

But for Reed, just like for Zerzeczna, the



terminal's cheap work space was the main drawing card.

Reed was making a living as a graphic designer. When business became slow, she decided to use the opportunity to go back to her painting, an early passion.

She started by working from home, before renting space at the terminal. This spring, Reed will hold an exhibition of her own work.

Until the new space opens, artists work on a smaller floor. It is a labyrinthine place of dividers and curtains, each turn leading to a different world, created by different artists.

In contrast to Chashama's Harlem studios, The Brooklyn Army Terminal space is isolated; groups of people do not walk in in the middle of the day to visit exhibitions, as they do in Manhattan.

For some, that's an advantage.

"It is quiet, it lets me think," said photographer Barry Rosenthal.

Artists can "see people work, and see their work," said Zerzeczna. "When you are an artist you have to have exposure to things you can't control."

Chashama converts vacant properties into theaters, galleries, studios, and window performance sites. Since 1995, Chashama has transformed more than 50 sites, and provided space for some 7,500 artists.

The art terminal is expanding with a new floor for artists.

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