



# FLEET

Exploring moveable temporary  
artist studios in Vancouver

---

an Other Sights production  
2021–2022

# Art space in the City

The City of Vancouver has the highest density of artists per capita in Canada; however, over the last 10 years, it has lost more than 400,000 square feet of studio space.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, the City released its [\*Making Space for Arts and Culture Vancouver cultural infrastructure plan\*](#) report. It found that cultural spaces are among the most vulnerable (and artists the most vulnerable to space loss) as a result of increased land values and displacement of arts and cultural activities. As such, City council committed “to optimize City policies, tools, programs and investment priorities to secure, enhance, and develop vibrant, affordable, and accessible arts and cultural spaces [page 1].”

In 2020, **Other Sights for Artists' Projects Association** (Other Sights), a Vancouver-based artist collective, secured a cultural infrastructure grant from the City of Vancouver to explore the feasibility of creating **affordable, moveable and non-habitable small structures that serve as temporary artist work-studio/production spaces.**

This project is called **FLEET**—a creative approach to complement the community's ongoing efforts to build more studio opportunities for artists.

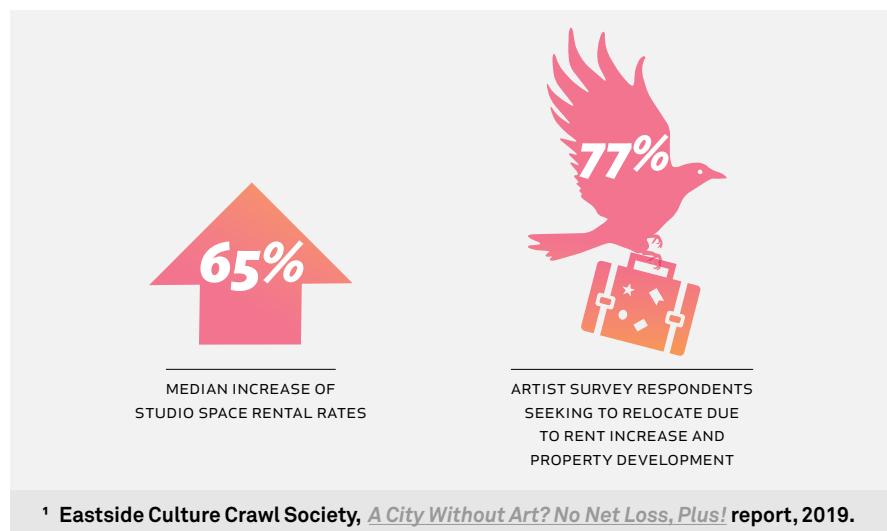
---

Formed in 2005, [Other Sights](#) is a non-profit organization and is dedicated to challenging perceptions and encouraging discourse about shared social spaces. As such, it seeks to create a presence for art in spaces and sites that are accessible to a broad public. The collective is guiding the feasibility/planning and design stages of the FLEET project. Working group members include: Marko Simcic (architect), Javier Campos (architect), Cedric Bomford (artist), Germaine Koh (artist), John Steil (community planner/artist) and Colin Griffiths (producer). [othersights.ca](http://othersights.ca)

---



*Spill/Oh Hell, Another Leak* by George Rammell, exploring displacement and the struggle to find or keep affordable studio space (Eastside Culture Crawl, 2019).



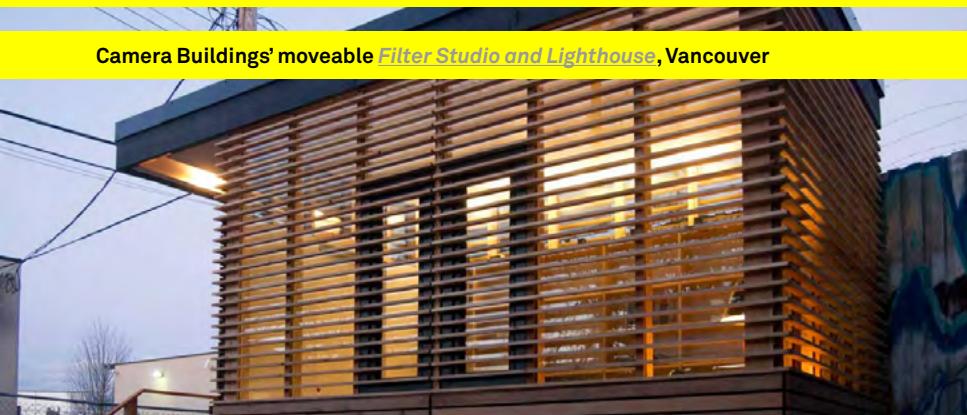
<sup>1</sup> Eastside Culture Crawl Society, [\*A City Without Art? No Net Loss, Plus!\*](#) report, 2019.

# A new FLEET forward

FLEET is a fast response to the loss of arts and culture hubs across Vancouver. A three-phase (planning, design and pilot) and multi-year (2021–2022) project, it aspires to **plan, design and pilot a FLEET of moveable studios for working artists, deploy them on a temporary basis in the City and manage their ongoing use**. Its overarching goals are:

1. **Function.** To provide functional and moveable units for creative production and curation, thus bringing awareness and responding to the critical lack of affordable and accessible studio space in the City
2. **Form.** To design beautiful and captivating artist studios that are themselves considered pieces of art, as a means to draw passersby into the project
3. **Showcase.** To move the artist away from the *out-of-sight* studio into a more visible and public area, hence engaging Vancouverites and visitors into the City's creative spaces, while shining a spotlight on the work of artists
4. **Partnership.** To bring community stakeholders and other non-profits into the making of this project through engagement, collaboration, sponsorship/rental of units and gifting or access to available, unused, under-used or transitional land, private or otherwise

Camera Buildings' moveable [Filter Studio and Lighthouse](#), Vancouver



## Next steps

### Phase one of the FLEET project (2021) is focused on planning.

It seeks to engage City staff, artistic organizations, artists, community groups, landowners and developers through questionnaires and interviews to better gauge the opportunities and challenges around this concept. This review will examine the following questions:

- How could this project benefit the art community specifically, and the participating City neighbourhoods more generally?
- What types of artistic creation could these units support (visual arts, written arts and so on)?
- Who are the future users of these units?
- What features should each customizable studio include, to best meet the needs of the artist(s) and City regulations (zoning, engineering, fire, building, planning)?
- Which typologies could be used for this project and built into creative and uniquely designed moveable artists studios?
- What about the length of tenure and proposed payment structure (including sponsorship) for each unit and participating artist(s) (define *temporary* and *affordable*)?
- Which foundation types work best for these units, and where could they be placed? On waterways, parking lots, privately owned/City land, and/or vacant lots or those awaiting development permits?
- How could these units be laid out—be it a single studio or a small cluster of studios—on a particular lot?
- What about insurance, security and other pertinent factors surrounding the units?
- How many artist studios could be included in the FLEET model?

Based on the findings of phase one, **phases two and three** (2021–2022) will examine the design and piloting of the FLEET project, and explore:

- Cost, design, construction of the moveable studios
- Placement, permitting and delivery of the units to pilot site(s)
- Development of a governance model and operation/financial plans for a new or existing non-profit organization to oversee the selection process, and manage and allocate all future studio assets

## In summary

The objectives of FLEET reflect goals and actions two through six as summarized in the City of Vancouver's *Making Space for Arts and Culture* report: to prioritize cultural heritage, equity, and accessibility; to remove regulatory barriers; to expand tools to prevent displacement and secure spaces; to expand community partnerships; and to increase community ownership. In this light, FLEET is not only a multi-stakeholder, collaborative and innovative project, it strategically aligns with City priorities and the needs of the artists who work and live here.

For more on the FLEET project, please contact Germaine Koh at [mail@germainekoh.com](mailto:mail@germainekoh.com) or 778-317-9745.



[The Blue Cabin](#) floating artist residency, Vancouver

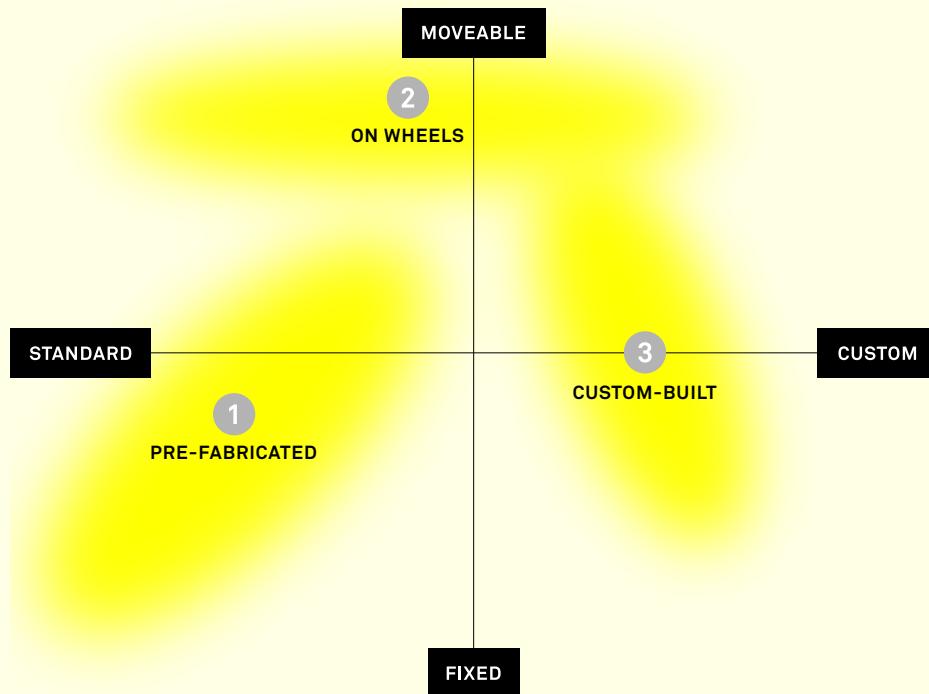


FLEET 2021–2022

# FLEET typologies

FLEET hopes to create both functional and visually striking artist spaces. These proposed typologies are references only, and may not reflect the project's final designs, as these will be greatly shaped by the findings of phase one's research. However, these examples are demonstrative of aesthetic diversity and climatic adaptations. That said, FLEET believes its designs could complement the City's heritage preservation program and meet environmental performance-based criteria as it relates to sourced materials, energy efficiency and the use of innovative renewables. Each proposed typology also features local/national, as well as international projects as precedents.

This matrix outlines various typologies that could serve the FLEET project—units that could easily be moved and/or fixed to a site, while standard or custom in their build, and varying degrees of all four.



Erin Moore's [Watershed](#) writer's studio, Oregon



Bureau A's [Antoine](#) concrete boulder artist studio, Switzerland

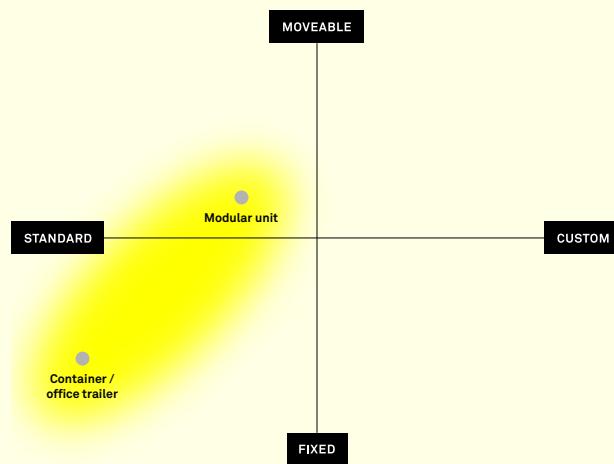


Rintala Eggertsson Architects' [BoxHome](#) studio, Norway



Crosson Clarke Carnachan Architects' [Hut on Sleds](#), New Zealand

# 1 Pre-fabricated



This studio space is a pre-fabricated, modular unit or retrofitted shipping container/office trailer that can be factory-built and transported and craned onto site with little disturbance to the neighbours and neighbourhood. The temporary unit can be placed on a permeable gravel pad using concrete blocks/piers or helical screw piles; both options do not require a permanent concrete slab foundation.

Factory-built pre-fabricated buildings, modules and panels are CSA-A277 compliant, which equally meets building and safety requirements outlined in the BC Building Code.

## FEATURES

**Unit size** 50 to 500 square feet

**Utilities** Connected to City services (water, electric, sewer); may include in-unit sink and toilet

**Placement** Single unit; industrial or commercial area

## Local + national precedents



Powers Construction's [retrofitted shipping container](#), Vancouver



Honomobo's [Mobo](#) mobile spaces, Edmonton

## International precedents



BIG's [modular cabin](#),  
Upstate New York

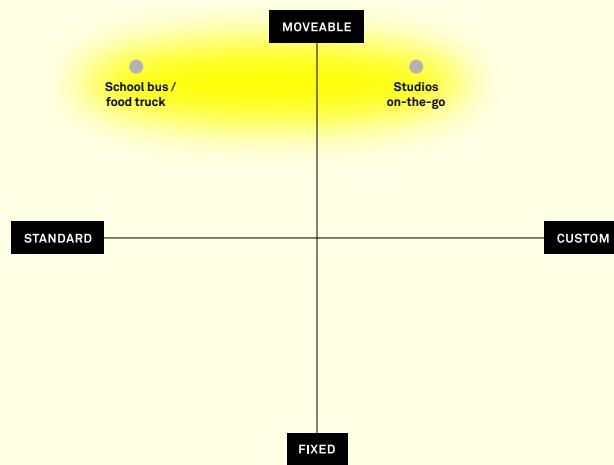


Richard Horden's  
[Micro Compact Home](#)  
016, Germany



Renzo Piano's [Diogene](#)  
cabin, Germany

## 2 On wheels



This studio space is contained within the construct of a truck, whereby the studio and motorized vehicle are a single unit, similar to a food truck. The unit can equally be built on a chassis or flat deck and brought to site using a tow truck or hitch and truck (studio on-the-go). This studio can be moved easily, and showcased throughout various neighbourhoods, at public events or at locations with lots of pedestrian traffic for greatest visibility.

These units adhere to transportation guidelines, and can be hooked up to City services much like an RV or food truck; they can be built to CSA park model or RV standards. Note: The studio on-the-go would need to be skirted and anchored, with the wheels and hitch locked.

### FEATURES

**Unit size** Less than 300 square feet

**Utilities** Connected to City services (water, electric); may include a sink but no in-unit toilet

**Placement** Single unit; on streets, in pedestrian only zones or in busy tourist areas

### Local + national precedents



Leah Weinstein's [SiteFactory](#) converted school bus, Vancouver



Germaine Koh's [Lululiving](#) moveable studio, Vancouver

### International precedents

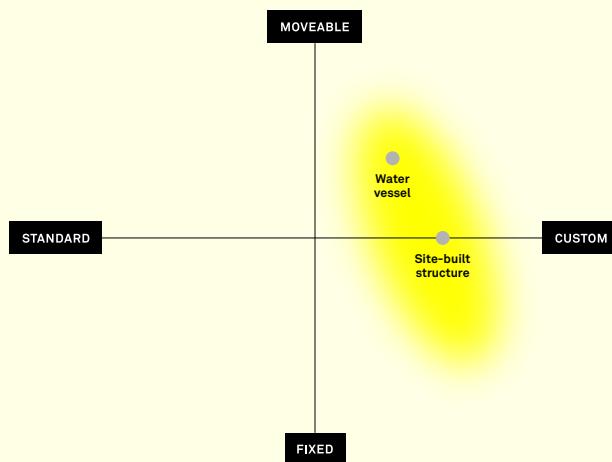


Five AM's [Dojo Wheels](#) transforming trailer, Belgium

Self-propelled truck/display concept, Worldwide

Corning Museum of Glass' [mobile hot shop](#), New York

### 3 Custom-built



This studio space mainly uses wood in its framing. It is customizable and buildable on-site (or off, and transported to its final location). The unit can then be placed on a variety of temporary or alternative foundations, including: concrete blocks/piers, helical screw piles, permeable gravel pad or floating foundation (for a water vessel/float home).

Wood-framed units use standard construction methods similar to shed/small structure or laneway standards outlined in the *Vancouver Building By-law* and *Laneway Housing How-To Guide*. Units placed on water adhere to marine transportation guidelines and the *British Columbia Float Home Standard*.

#### FEATURES

**Unit size** 50 to 300 square feet

**Utilities** Connected to City services (water, electric, sewer); may include a sink and an in-unit toilet

**Placement** Single unit or cluster; on waterways or residential areas; preferably close to community centre amenities/washroom facilities

#### Local precedents



Holly Ward's [The Pavilion](#) at Langara College, Vancouver



[The Blue Cabin](#) floating artist residency, Vancouver

#### Canadian + international precedents



Simcic + Uhrich Architects' [Gambier Cabin](#), Gambier Island



Bridge Studio's Fogo Island Arts residency [huts](#), Newfoundland



Bothy Project's [off-grid art residency spaces](#), Scotland