



Chelsea Studios – The Italian Village

Chelsea Studios was created in the late 1920s, the inspiration of Italian artist and sculptor, Mario Manenti and was first known as the Italian Village. Studio X within Chelsea Studios has most recently been the home of mannequin designer, John Taylor, who sculptured mannequins in the style of iconic models, including Twiggy. Studio X was also the home of academy award nominated art director and production designer, Michael Stringer. Chelsea Studios has been home to many artists, sculptors and creative residents including royal artist, Pietro Annigoni, sculptor, Winifred Turner and before the artist studios were completed it was home to Greco-roman style artist, John William Godward.

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Today, Chelsea Studios still manages to maintain a secluded air of tranquillity, despite its busy location and features a picturesque garden which even includes an Italian-style water fountain, as well as a porter's lodge that "looks as though it has come straight out of the pages of a fairy-tale". It also features ornate wrought-iron gates and lanterns as well as grape-vines and walnut trees, which were originally imported from Italy, along with fruit trees and climbing plants.

Chelsea Studios are firstly made up of two large Victorian homes, built in around 1840, the original Nos. 410/412 and 414/416 Fulham Road. In the early years of the 20th century No. 410 Fulham Road was home to prominent Victorian artist, John William Godward and No. 416 was a bronze and iron casting foundry.

John William Godward

John William Godward was a successful artist during the late Victorian period into the early 20th century, specialising in Greco-Roman style painting, similar to artists, Lawrence Alma-Tadema and Frederick Leighton. He produced many paintings including *The Betrothed* (1892) and *Dolce Far Niente* (1904). Godward's works have been exhibited at the Royal Academy along with galleries in Rome and Paris and today his work appears in galleries in New York, Los Angeles and the UK.

Creating the Italian Village

The two original Victorian homes, now listed as Buildings of Merit, were bought by artist and sculptor, Mario Manenti in 1925-30, who then set about creating the Italian Village, inspired by the artists' colonies, near his home in Florence. Situated behind the two larger Victorian homes Manenti built communal studios, varying in design and size, and established a "place of beauty where artists could live and work". The first residents moved into the village in 1928.

Mario Manenti

Mario Manenti was a sculptor and artist, who particularly specialised in bronze. He is most often remembered today, for his World War I war memorials, including one at Dover. However, his legacy of artist studios has left an indelible mark, especially to the former residents of this quiet corner of Fulham.

Studio X

John Michael Stringer

By the mid 1950s Studio X had become the home of production designer and art director, John Michael Stringer. Stringer worked on over 30 films as a production designer, including *Casino Royale* (1967), *The Awakening* (1980), and pink panther film, *A Shot in the Dark* (1964). Stringer was also art director for another 20 films, including *Fiddler on the Roof* (1971), for which he earned an academy award nomination.

John Taylor

The most recent resident of Studio X was John Taylor, mannequin designer for Adel Rootstein and Co, who is renowned for his role in the revolution of the appearance of the high street mannequin. Along with creator, Adel Rootstein, Taylor transformed the lifeless 1950s-style mannequins into the more life-like ones we have today. He sculpted mannequins based on popular icons of the day, including one of their first, the quintessential Twiggy. John Taylor continues to sculpt mannequins based on models, including most recently, Agyness Deyn.



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Pietro Annigoni

The Italian Village has been the home of many illustrious artists and creative residents since it was first occupied in the late 1920s, including royal portrait painter, Pietro Annigoni. Annigoni is often remembered for his paintings of royalty, in particular the Queen in 1954, but he also painted former presidents of the United States, including John F. Kennedy and Lyndon. B. Johnson. His paintings are held in galleries across the world, including the Uffizi in Florence, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Portrait Gallery and the Vatican in Rome.

Other Artists of Chelsea Studios

One of the earliest residents of Chelsea Studios was sculptor, Winifred Turner, whose sculptures have been exhibited at the V&A, the Royal Academy and her piece, *Thought* (1933), is held in the Tate collection. Another prominent resident was portrait painter, Aubrey Davidson-Houston, who is noted for his paintings of Somerset Maugham and Prince Charles but he also painted the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother. Later residents have included artist, Derek Ashley; writer, Noel Barber; designer, Annie Brown from Eavis and & Brown, who designed Heather Mills' wedding dress; garden designer and sculptor, Joan Edlis and sculptor, Jan Kepinski.

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