Financially Sustainable, Self-Sufficient Artist Studio

1.

Problem:
A difficult situation

Artists, especially emerging artists, are generally constantly searching for resources. They need materials to make art, they need a studio to work in, they need a space to exhibit in and they need to generate an income from their art in order to pursue their practice. Most importantly, they also need attention and desire, if not fame, at least some form of recognition.
2.

Objective:
Create a framework that allows for a sustainable art practice

2.1
Provide artist with a space to work and exhibit artwork.

2.2
The space should not only be free but also generate both a regular income (at least the minimum necessary to survive) and public attention (at least enough to encourage the artist to persevere with his/her practice).
3. **Solution:**

**Design**

3.1 An artist studio surrounded by an elevated balcony from which viewers can observe the artist working. Access to the balcony is granted in exchange of a modest entrance fee.

3.2 The entire structure that comprises the artist studio, surrounding balcony, cashier desk, hallway and stairway to balcony, should be as simple as possible. The structure must be easy to build and, once built, easy to manage.

3.3 The structure can serve as both a studio and exhibition space, and can be implanted and used in public spaces (where permitted), inside an art gallery, museum, during a residency, an art fair, a biennale, etc.
4. **Solution: System**

4.1 Wherever the structure is implanted, the immediate surroundings will always provide the artist with enough found materials to make plenty of art.

4.2 Found materials can be sold to viewers at the entrance, so that they have the chance to give it themselves to the artist from the balcony. When accomplished at a modest scale, this symbolic gesture provides the gratifying impression of being a generous art patron feeding the artist without the burden of a true commitment.

4.3 This process has the double advantage of making the viewers feel like they are contributing philanthropically as patrons of the arts, while simultaneously having the opportunity to actually participate in a contemporary art discourse. Also, by giving directly to the artist instead of paying taxes (which would then be swallowed by the government before a small percentage reaches some art institutions through a complex system of redistribution), the viewers experience a very stimulating yet politically non-compromising form of social engagement. As a result, after such an experience, most viewers should be inclined to visit again, spread the word and bring more viewers.

4.4 This process also encourages the development of a sustainable relationship between artist and audience. The audience is asked to contribute financially, but the artist also has to generate enough interest or at least curiosity to keep attracting viewers. This democratic process of validation based one hundred percent on private founding guarantees the survival of only the most outstanding critical and visionary art practices.
5.

View of the structure

A. Structure (wood)
B. Entrance
C. Window
D. Cashier's desk
E. Stairway to balcony
F. Balcony
G. Banister
H. Artist studio
6.

Floor plan

A. Entrance door

B. Window panel / turns into desk when window is open
   (desk/panel can be lifted up to close the window and clear the way)

C. Hallway / Exhibition space

D. Stairway to balcony

E. Storage / VIP area

F. Door to studio

G. Artist Studio
7.
Considerations: Running the studio

7.1
Ideally, a studio assistant would help collecting found materials and would sit at the cashier’s desk when the artist is working. However, if there is no studio assistant, the entrance fee can be collected by the artist, who would first let in a group of viewers, then shut the entrance door and enter the studio area, where he/she would work for some time before asking the viewers to leave and welcome a new group.

7.2
The artist might suffer psychologically from being under constant observation, eight feet below viewers who may not necessarily be as impressed or respectful as the artist wishes. But that is a necessary compromise to be at the center of public attention. Further, this should not be a problem as historically an impressive number of artists have put themselves in much more difficult and humiliating situations.
8.
Outcome:
A positive impact

8.1
The structure makes the production of actual artworks secondary. The entry fee should provide a sufficient income to guarantee the survival of the artist, and the studio practice of the artist should arouse enough curiosity to attract viewers and satisfy the artist’s minimal need of attention.

8.2
This system promotes the studio practice itself as the core of the artist’s work, as opposed to the making of artworks that would later leave the studio, enter the art world, be ignored or considered, be judged if considered, and eventually be acknowledged or dismissed. By proposing an alternative to this avenue of vanity or frustration, the system being proposed here also holds a position against elitism, a position which favors participation over successful results, the studio as the true place to see Art, being an artist over making art.
9. Notes: Further possibilities

9.1 The proposed structure is simply a model that could and should be adapted by the artist to suit his/her needs.

9.2 The artist is strongly encouraged to be creative with the structure. Studio visits, open-studio days, parties, impromptu discussions with friends, etc., are all part of a normal studio activity and can be thought of as exciting special events to be held in the structure.

9.3 A successful and/or ambitious artist could think of ways to take advantage of the structure to expand his practice. For example, he/she could buy neighbor artists’ studios to make his/her bigger and accommodate a larger audience, and hire the newly studioless artists as studio assistants. The artist could also open franchise studios in different locations, and hire more assistants to replace him in the studios. The possibilities are limitless.