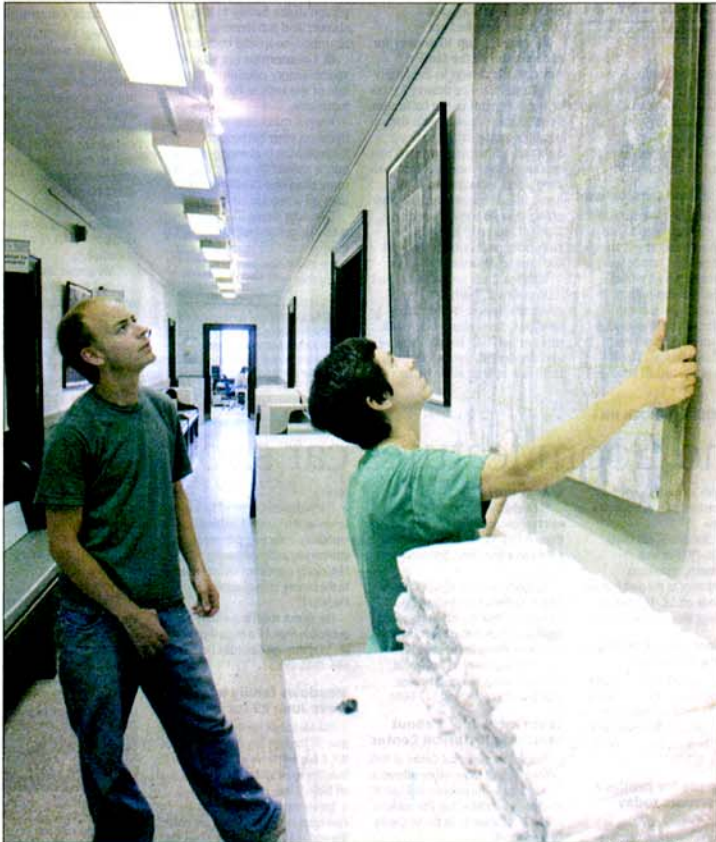


LIFESTYLES

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Andy Burriss • The Herald

Alfred McCloud and Stephanie Jordan hang her work at the Gallery at Gettys Friday. McCloud's work is in the foreground.

the time is right to go downtown

Crawl through Rock Hill's art galleries tonight

By Lauren Hoyt
The Herald

If the theory was simply, "build it and they will come," the arts community would be thriving downtown.

Three galleries are now open in downtown, steps from one another on Main Street. They include the Dalton Gallery at the Center for the Arts, Gallery 5 and Gallery at Gettys. There are about a dozen artists' studios downtown, too.

Yet on a Friday afternoon, not a single artist was spotted in his or her studio, nor was there a visitor in any of the galleries.

So is there an arts community downtown?

Gallery at Gettys co-owner Tamara LaValla holds her two fingers together quite closely, to show how big the community is.

"We're still working on that," said Kathy Caudill, an artist who has had a studio in the Center for the Arts since it opened in 1996. "There a lot of people who still don't know we're there. The word just doesn't quite get out."

That's one reason for the gallery crawls that have been organized over the last couple years. A crawl will be from 6:30 to 8:30 tonight, with the three galleries hosting receptions as well as sidewalk jazz by Summer Daze and The Professionals and street vendors. The event is being presented by Rock Hill Economic Development Corporation in conjunction with the Arts Council of

See GALLERY • 2D



Jim Stratakos • The Herald

Kathy Caudill puts finishing touches on a watercolor painting she's calling "Tea and Roses."

WANT TO GO?

What: Jazz and Art Crawl.

When: 6:30 to 8:30 tonight.

Where: Main Street, downtown Rock Hill. Gallery at Gettys and Gettys studios, 201 E. Main St.; Gallery 5, fifth floor, 131 E. Main St.; Center for the Arts and studios, 121 E. Main St.

Also: Sidewalk jazz by Summer Daze and The Professionals, street vendors.

Tuesday • June 20, 2006

Gallery from 1D

Rock Hill and York County. "Gallery crawls are more about education than selling work," said Wanda Steppe, who has had a studio in the Center for the Arts since 1997. She moved from a home studio to downtown to have a safe place to bring people to show her work. "It's an advantage that people become aware that we're here."

An artists' community?

"If you take and look at the number of studios in downtown Rock Hill, it's really amazing to think that there are that many art studios concentrated in that small area," said Jennifer Hamilton, who has rented a studio in the Center for the Arts since January and in the Gettys Center for seven years before that. "A lot of towns don't have that."

But despite the number of artists working downtown, they don't feel part of a larger community.

"We come and go at different times," said Caudill. "I would like to see more of the different artists."

Steppe said she's there to get her work done, and closes her door to concentrate.

Hamilton echoes that idea. "When you go there, it's like a job," she said. She considers the other artists in the building "professional peers." She may see someone every day, or not for several weeks.

Harriet Goode, artist and owner of Gallery 5, had a studio in the Center for the Arts when it opened through 2001. "It was as supportive as it knew how to be," she said of the studio environment.

The purpose of creating the artists' studios was not necessarily to create an artist colony. It was to create a place for established and developing artists to work, to collect rent to help

subsidize the payments of the two buildings — the Center for the Arts and Gettys Center, owned by the arts council — and to bring vitality to an otherwise vacant building, said arts council executive director, Debra Heintz.

But some artists wish it could be something more, like LaValla, who owns art and design firm LaValla Maddox, with an office in the Gettys Center. "I would love to go downstairs and talk to somebody and re-energize," she said.

Working on synergy

While the artists themselves might not define an arts community downtown, the proliferation of galleries just might.

"The more art you have — galleries, studios, Center for the Arts — it makes Rock Hill a visible art town," Hamilton said.

Tom Stanley is working on coordinating those galleries and creating a "scene." Stanley, an artist and galleries director at Winthrop University, is on the arts council board and is the chairman of the exhibition committee of the Dalton Gallery, which includes galleries at both the Center for the Arts and at Clinton Junior College.

He is behind a new downtown arts initiative to "to try and create some synergy" between downtown, Clinton Junior College and Winthrop's galleries. The program will begin in September.

He will bring artists from beyond York County's borders to exhibit and will also have them talk about their work. The goal is to create a buzz outside of Rock Hill and renew interest in the local community.

"What we want to do is demystify this art thing so people aren't afraid of it," he said. "And begin to build some momentum."

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