

Nontraditional art finds a home in a new Redlands gallery

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In a large airy space above Redlands' old Rainbow Theatre, art hangs from floor to ceiling -- oversize portraits next to photographs of Paris alongside abstracts splashed with color.

The Art From Scratch gallery is the brainchild and dream of Redlands artist Rachel White.

"A group of us got together to build up a gallery from scratch," White said.

The venture opened Feb. 1 with works from the 12 founding artists on display.

New shows launch twice a month, with opening festivities usually on the first and 15th of each month, she said. Catered food, drinks and music have been donated for the opening events.

Each show features different artists, with work running from ceramics to metal work and photography to spray paintings.



"Our works are modern and eclectic, and nothing is turned away," White said.

Shows do not have stated themes.

"The artists can display anything they want," she said. "I tell them to put it up and see what people think of it."

Fifty-six Inland and Los Angeles artists already have displayed work in the gallery during its short life. Artists' ages range from mid-teens to mid-70s.

Participating artists have been asked to contribute toward the gallery's rent but are not required to return any percentage of their sales to the gallery, White said. She is constantly searching for new artists to showcase and encourage and she promotes commission and networking opportunities, she said.

In conjunction with the gallery, White has established a Foundation for the Arts, which she hopes will gather donations, grants and other support. She said she already has received calls and pledges of support from Inland arts venues as well as in Los Angeles.

White also has reached out to Inland universities and colleges, which are sending their art students to the gallery for extra-credit assignments.

White, 23, grew up in Redlands and graduated from Redlands East Valley High School. She has had little formal art training, but has been creating illustrations and portraiture since childhood.

She left Redlands after high school to live in Los Angeles, where she participated in the art scene, but moved back to her hometown last summer with designs on opening her own gallery.

"It's a rebellious thing, since I was never taught art the way most artists are who learn it in school, but it's also a conservative thing since the goal (of the gallery) is to preserve the arts," White said. "The modern arts are not accepted, especially in Redlands."

Redlands artist Gary Newharth, 70, agreed with her assessment of the local art scene.

"Redlands is not known for contemporary art," he said. "This gallery is a pioneering thing here, where most of the art is traditional."

Newharth has shown his paintings in the gallery.

White said she turned down an opportunity to attend art school to realize her goal of supporting and helping other artists to expand and develop their talents.

"It means everything to me to show my work in the gallery," said Jason Curtis, 28, a Big Bear Lake artist who paints large, colorful canvases. "I have been creating art for eight years and these are my first steps for coming out with my work in this area."

Supporting and nurturing new artists is as important to White as pursuing her personal artistic goals.

"What I try to project in my own art is that it is OK to change and grow and learn," she said. "Tomorrow I'll be 80, so I have to do it today."