

## VISUALARTS



**"DRAWING NO. 99"** By Robert Scott, who, along with his studio partner Terrence Keller, have had to close the doors on 25 years of artistry.

## Shut out

High costs of rent forces artists to leave the core

AN ARTIST'S STUDIO IS AS MUCH A creative inspiration as anything else. Terrence Keller has been working on the second floor of the Great West Saddlery Building for 10 years, but finally circumstances have forced him to relocate.

"Yes, and I thought I'd do a show, a selection of work from the last 25 years," he explains, citing new management and higher rents as the pri-

mary reasons for his leaving. The building, an ideal downtown workspace to many artists over the years, was until recently home to Latitude 53, which also had to relocate to cheaper accommodations this winter.

Keller's moving-out exhibition features work spanning the years since his graduation from the Alberta College of Art in 1973 to the

present. He paints large abstract images in various media (oils, acrylics), generally using lots of colour and texture with broad, visible brushstrokes. The canvases tend to be very large, some of them as high as the copper-tile ceilings. And his large space, with its west-facing windows and slanted hardwood floors, he says, influenced his later work:

"It's affected me in very positive ways. It is just about the perfect space in terms of light, and it's very open so I can produce very large paintings.

"I think what's really changed is that the colours have gotten better with time as I matured as an artist."

The building's new owners will renovate the space, which he shares with artist Robert Scott. So far, the other tenants are safe, but the second floor is the first victim of redevelopment. Ironically, the higher rents of many downtown workspaces are the result of artists reclaiming the otherwise empty buildings. Sadly, while condos continue to proliferate, artists like Keller and Scott are victims of a gentrification unwittingly of their own making.

"We're both going to be storing our work until we find a new space. I've even thought of building in the backyard."

Downtown has been the ideal location for him this past decade, and he would like to find a centralized studio again if he could. But most likely, it will be in a cheaper, industrial area.

Keller reminisces about a happier time, when spontaneous groups of ten or fifteen Great West Saddlery residents got together for coffee or lunch on any given day.

"That was the thing about Edmonton. There were a lot of buildings where there was inexpensive rent. There used to be a lot of artists in this one. There was a real community down here, but over the years it's really dwindled away.

"Right now, there are still a few here who won't have to leave, but sooner or later..."

*Terrence Keller's and Robert Scott's work can still be viewed by appointment. Call 426-1503.*

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