

# Art gallery suddenly out on street

## Building owner won't say why he moved contents outside

By Lauren Bishop  
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A month ago, business partners and Cheviot residents Jonathan Sears and Chris Hoeting opened a new contemporary art gallery called the Northside House at 4034 Colerain Ave. Their dream: To showcase up-and-coming artists, established masters and progressive installations in the shotgun-style brick house built in 1880.

But last week they found a padlock on the door of Northside House, and on Thursday, they arrived to find what they said was more than \$50,000 worth of artwork sitting outside with temperatures over 90 degrees.

Sears and Hoeting said they have received no adequate explanation for their abrupt eviction, in writing or in person, from the building's owner, Doug Hafner, who is co-owner of the popular Northside restaurant Honey.

Hafner's wife and business partner, Shoshannah Hafner, said the couple had no comment when contacted Friday night.

"We're not trying to drag anybody's name through the mud," said Sears, 29. "We just want to get our space back or get them to recoup all

the money and time we've spent so we can do it again somewhere else."

Sears estimated that the two had spent \$15,000-\$20,000 to turn the two-story building into a gallery, including \$3,000 on track lighting.

Sears said Hafner had asked them to convert the building into a gallery, and that he and Hoeting verbally agreed with Hafner, in the presence of lawyers, to occupy the space rent-free for six months while they got the gallery off the ground. They also agreed to give Hafner 40 percent of the profits, Sears said. On the advice of their attorney, they were waiting until they formed a limited liability company for the gallery to sign a lease, Sears said.

Friday, they were planning an opening reception to show works by Ellington Robinson of Washington, D.C., and Jon Payne of Dayton to complete their first exhibition, "Inauguration," which also features works by Steve Amos of Chicago and Alice Pixley Young of Northside. An exhibit of African ceremonial art called "Life" is also on display.

Without a gallery to show the work, Sears and Hoeting turned the opening reception into what they called "Double U-haul Renegade Truck Show and Fundraiser." They

rented two 24-foot trucks, butted them up together on Colerain Avenue in front of the gallery and rigged a gasoline-powered generator for impromptu lighting.

"New juice," Hoeting hollered when the lights went out and went to refill the generator. "The perils of a makeshift gallery."

Amos, who attended art school at the University of Maryland with Hoeting and Sears, said he was proud of them for finding a way to show the work.

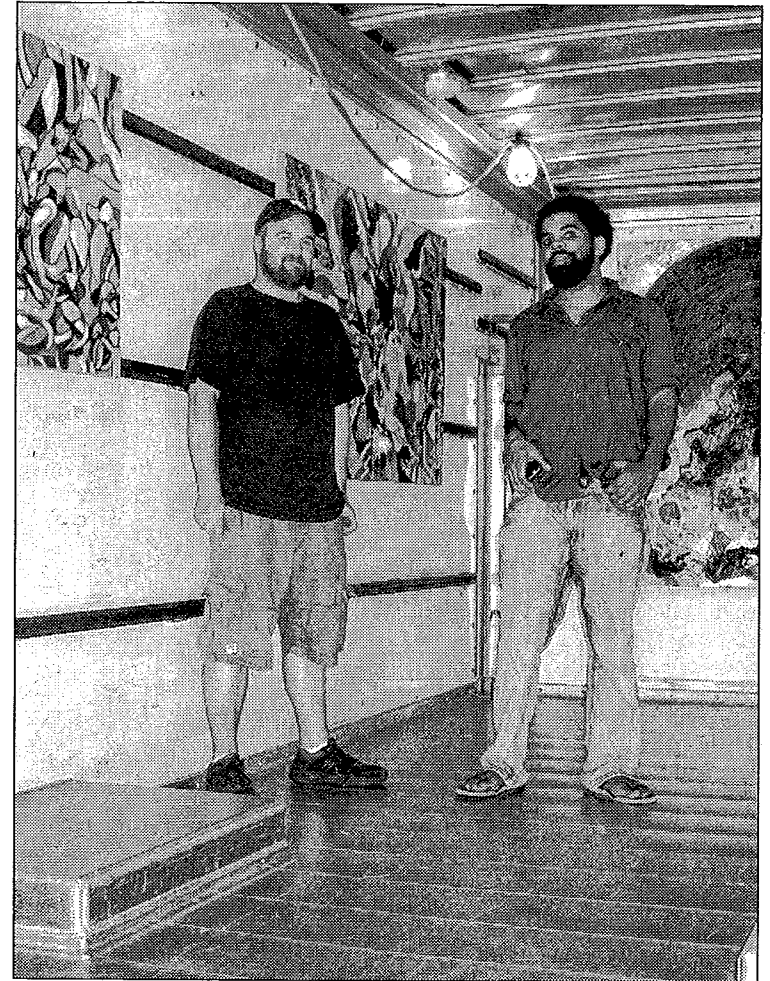
"They told me all the work got put out on the lawn and I was kind of ticked off," Amos said. "Acrylic is a finicky medium, and it doesn't really like extreme temperatures. ... I have a string of exhibitions coming up and that was my concern."

Amos said he was relieved to find his pieces - which took him months to complete - in good shape, but he still hadn't seen some of his drawings that were in storage.

The artwork that Sears and Hoeting found outside Thursday, which they quickly moved into a cool storage area, does not appear to be damaged, Sears said. But they have filed a report with Cincinnati Police Department, citing wrongful eviction and destruction of property.

Sears said they found a telephone and answering machine smashed inside the gallery after the first opening.

Staff reporter Carrie Whitaker contributed.



The Enquirer/Carrie Whitaker

Northside House co-founder Jonathan Sears (right) and his business partner moved their gallery into two U-Haul trucks Friday. Steve Amos (left), is a Chicago-based artist.

## Officer: Claims malice motivated treatment

