

The Arts Scene

Dols uses open space downtown for art

If my columns in the past three months seemed like installments of "The Miscellaneous Wilmington Adventures of Matt Dols," well, they weren't. It's just that I like to write about current happenings and issues in the arts community, and Mr. Dols is everywhere and into everything.

In this episode, Mr. Dols, photographer and owner of Tabula Rasa, is getting a program started using empty downtown storefront windows as show spaces for artists.

PAINT OUTSIDE THE LINES



AMANDA GREENE

He got tired of walking around downtown and seeing empty, lonely window spaces and wondering why they weren't being used. (In case you haven't noticed, Mr.

Dols has a flare for filling underutilized spaces in town such as a parking deck or a former gardening shop for his Art for the Masses events.)

"I wanted to start to make art more prevalent in people's lives," he said. "It's a grander economic stimuli."

But Mr. Dols couldn't just start putting random paintings or sculpture in vacant storefronts without the approval of property owners and Wilmington Downtown, Inc., formerly DARE (Downtown Area Revitalization Effort.) Recently, he got an initial blessing.

"Anytime we can engage the art community in downtown, that's good for us," said Susi Hamilton, executive director of Wilmington Downtown, Inc. "I don't think he'll have a problem getting a buy-in from the realtors."

Mr. Dols will contact each of the

downtown realtors to ask if artists can show there and what space requirements they must fulfill.

"The realtors need to realize that this draws attention to their space," he said. "If people start seeing art everywhere they go, then they'll go home, realize they don't have a lot of art and buy more. And it stimulates artists because it gets their work noticed."

Mr. Dols plans to get some of the first downtown art exhibitions in windows within the next two or three months. Artists who are interested in getting their work downtown should contact Mr. Dols to get on a waiting list for a space. The only fee he plans to charge is \$25 per artist for administrative costs, and the art will be displayed in each space about two or three months at a time.

Don't worry, artists. Mr. Dols doesn't plan to jury the art – just make it tasteful.

I can't think of a better chapter to add to Mr. Dols' adventures than this one. Now it's up to the artists to respond and get your work in the public eye. Details: 251-9296.

A VALENTINE'S TREAT

Instead of giving those fattening chocolate boxes for Valentine's Day, get more creative and take your special love to the Wilmington Gallery for "The Three Sisters Show" in the gallery at Chandler's Wharf. The three sister-artists are Chris Bosna Farley, Catherine Bosna and Mia Bosna. The reception for their show is 4-6 p.m. Saturday, Valentine's Day, so you can swing by the gallery before you have your fancy dinner.

Details: 343-4370.

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