

# Community of artists crafts a place to call home

As glass artists Joshua Poll and Dave Walker worked a torch to make goblets, a crowd of more than 200 art patrons milled about a sprawling art complex off Emerson Avenue S this month, admiring the work of five artists that adorned the walls and stands.



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Nestled in a corridor that once was St. Petersburg's warehouse district is an artists' enclave that is home to at least a dozen industrial artists, including several who are nationally renowned.

Poll and Walker recently moved Zen Glass, their lamp working and glass art studio, from 900 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. St. S to 600 27th St. S in the Dome Industrial District, which lies along the Interstate 275 corridor southeast of the intersection of Fifth Avenue S and 28th Street.

As Walker noted, their move typifies a trend. "We started in our house, moved to MLK for four years and now we have neighbors like Duncan McClellan," a world famous glass artist. "We're so close to everybody now that we can work collaboratively."

As artists move to the district, it signals that the city's efforts, adopted in 2007 as the Dome Industrial Park's Community Redevelopment Plan, are gaining traction.

"It's truly an artists' enclave," said Shrimatee Ojah-Maharaj, manager of the city's Business Assistance Center. "The type of people we have there are world-class. It's amazing what's going on there."

The city recently hosted an artists' resource collaborative at the St. Pete Clay Factory at 420 22nd St. S. According to Ojah-Maharaj, the session was designed to help neighboring artists and other businesses learn more about services and resources available there.

The event was open to businesses within a quarter mile of the Clay Factory. It drew more than 40 businesses, and 75 percent of the attendees were artists.

"In this economy, that is what clustering is all about. There are other things that they (artists) use that can help recruit other businesses there," she said.

The event also drew the support of an owner of a bed-and-breakfast as well as a taxi company.

But the event represented more than



Dave Walker, co-owner of Zen Glass, uses a torch to create a goblet during a demonstration at Beyond the Glass — Second Saturday Art Walk at Duncan McClellan Glass.

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a gathering of artists. It also conveys the cohesion of a growing community of artists who are excited about the cluster they now call home.

No one knows that more than artist Janos Enyedi, who recently relocated from Mason Neck, Va.

Enyedi credits the city's artist resource program. He said he found the minutes of an artists' gathering on the city's website.

"Wow, St. Petersburg really has a lot going on in the arts," he said, adding that he called Ojah-Maharaj and arranged to meet with staff from the city's economic development and zoning departments.

"It's all serendipity," said Enyedi, whose artwork focuses on American industry and ports. His works have been on loan in foreign embassies across the globe.

He calls his studio Furnace Road Studio South, after the name of the street he lived on in Virginia.

His building is the original home of an old candy factory. More recently, it was the home of LumaStream, a lighting manufacturing company that moved to 22nd Avenue N.

St. Petersburg artist Bob Stackhouse "was a big influence on me," he said. Enyedi also credits Clearwater artist Roy Slade. "He told me, 'Clearwater is not a good art place; neither is Tampa. The only place to be is St. Pete.'"

Enyedi credits Stackhouse and Carol Mickett for starting the move of industrial artists to the city. "They are the real pioneers here," he said. Stackhouse and Mickett converted a former Barclay Corset factory in the Old Southeast neighbor-

hood into their live-work studio.

"What really excites me is that this isn't a large community yet, but it's really close-knit," he said.

At the center of the close community is McClellan, who since moving to his Emerson Avenue S compound has served as mentor, recruiter and host to countless gatherings for other emerging artists.

"Duncan (McClellan) helped us avoid reinventing some wheels. He's a mentor for all of us. He's helping so many people. He's a spark for this whole movement," Enyedi says.

But some would argue that Enyedi's presence is just as vital to the burgeoning enclave.

"Janos Enyedi's studio is not open to the public, but his business dealings are international in scope," said Ojah-Maharaj. Enyedi is also co-founder of the Washington (D.C.) Lawyers for the Arts, which provides need-based legal assistance on art-related matters. That program has been going for 25 years and recently named an artists' award in Enyedi's honor. He hopes to start a similar effort here.

"They (McClellan and Enyedi) understand the process of going through development services, and they can become mentors for others who are interested in moving to the area," said Ojah-Maharaj.

"The potential here is so extraordinary," said Enyedi. "We're so lucky to be in this part of the vanguard."

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