

Trading Spaces

Lawrence's loss is Kansas City's gain as the Paragraph Gallery celebrates its new, urban digs.

By Gina Kaufmann

This Friday's party at **Paragraph Gallery's** new downtown space isn't like other art openings. The only colors on the walls are various layers of plaster in peach, green or brown that still line the pillars. But Hesse McGraw is throwing a party anyway -- a festive gallery warming with a thirty-minute video loop combining silent shorts by seven or eight artists from all over the country. DJ Memphis Black will spin funk records starting at 9 p.m. The capoeira dance troupe Grupo Beribazu is also scheduled to perform at a nearby outdoor lot.

The nomadic gallery originally opened in Lawrence last fall in an elegant room adjacent to the Eldridge Hotel's lobby. When the gallery's show turned out to be more than eye candy, hotel operators (rumored to prefer impressionist-style cowboy paintings) were displeased and asked the Paragraph to hit the road.

Now it inhabits an old storefront just north of the old Jones Store building downtown. The Urban Culture Project, which puts art exhibits inside empty downtown windows, officially leased the space to the Paragraph Gallery and *Review* magazine just last week. It's an open area with a tiered, three-level floor.

McGraw envisions sliding walls that will soon divide the three floors, making the room's shape flexible. The highest section will be dedicated to *Review's* offices, and Paragraph will occupy the lowest section. And -- this is the coolest part, as far as McGraw is concerned -- the middle section will be used by whichever of the two needs it more at any given moment. On the third Friday of the month, when Paragraph holds its openings, the gallery will expand. On the other hand, when a *Review* meeting is in session, the magazine's offices will open into that area.

Though Kansas City's art scene is vibrant, McGraw says it still lacks video installations and interdisciplinary shows. "The constant goal is to fill those voids," he says of the art he plans to show.

But he's already busy filling another void -- the one downtown after 5 p.m.

Kansas Citians can already feel the difference, too. "Suddenly," McGraw says, "every Friday night of the month, there's a different neighborhood to attend an opening in, which is amazing."

Details

Who / What:

Pick Up the Intensity!

Details:

Friday, May 16, 7-10 p.m.,
816-471-5937

Where:

The new Paragraph Gallery, 23
East 12th Street