

the arts

# GALLERY ROW TRANSFORMS DOWNTOWN L A

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES IS GENERALLY MORE SYNONYMOUS WITH HOMELESSNESS and the smell of urine than arts or culture. But thanks to some daring entrepreneurs and cultural initiatives, Gallery Row defies the stereotype, proving that gentrification is imminent.

Designed to increase arts and culture in the area, Gallery Row's realization harks back to July 29, 2003, when the Los Angeles City Council designated the area along Main Street and Spring Street between 2nd Street and 9th Street. Gallery Row was formally introduced to the public at an unveiling ceremony hosted by Council Member Jan Perry and sponsored by the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council in May of 2004.

Now in 2005, Gallery Row looks set to transform LA's cultural landscape. After much blood, sweat and tears since its unveiling, the district has grown from four art galleries to 13 and now includes Bank Gallery, Bert Green Fine Arts, the Los Angeles Center For Digital Art, and Pharmaka Gallery, with several new spaces in development.

The evolution of Downtown LA as an arts district is not only beneficial for the realization of a city center, but also for the economic betterment of the larger community. In November of 2004, the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation prepared a study on the impact of cultural tourism on the economy of Los Angeles County. It found that 2.58 million cultural tourists visited Los Angeles County during 2003, spending \$535 million beyond their cultural activities, with an associated economic output of \$1.1 billion.

In addition to arts institution employees, these cultural tourists sustained the equivalent of 10,500 full-time jobs in Los Angeles County and generated tax revenues of \$54 million for the state, county and city governments.



Wayne Martin Belger at Bert Green Fine Arts





*House of Cards / Josh Rowan at Los Angeles Center for Digital Art*

A central body governing Gallery Row, the Gallery Row Organization, aims to "educate the public and facilitate cultural and economic revitalization" by providing consulting services and educational programs, encouraging creative businesses and cultural institutions to establish locations within Gallery Row, and creating new economic incentives for the incubation of enterprises within Gallery Row.

Rex Bruce, gallerist and manager at the Los Angeles Center For Digital Art, is adamant about Gallery Row's inevitable success: "It is an excellent opportunity for LA's emerging artists. With the support of so many different government entities, its chances for success are high."

In addition to providing an ideal venue for local artists, Bert Green of Bert Green Fine Arts believes Gallery Row has huge economic significance. "The Downtown Artwalk has grown from 23 participants to 30 galleries," he explains. "These galleries and those of Gallery Row will aid in soliciting and relocating creative businesses back to LA's historic core."

Held on the second Thursday of every month, the Downtown Artwalk is a self-guided tour of the art exhibition venues in Downtown, including commercial art galleries, public museums, non-profit spaces and grassroots arts venues. **B**

More info at: [www.galleryrow.org](http://www.galleryrow.org)

— Craig Stephens



*Bailed / Bari Ziperstein  
at Bank Gallery*



*Untitled / Sharon Guirguis  
at Bank Gallery*



*Desert Weeds / Christopher Cousins at Pharmaka Gallery*