



MOVING IN Artist Stephen Lynch's piece, "Entropy."

Home Is Where the Art Is

Artist Stephen Lynch is among the first to move into the Tannery Arts Center | **BY MATT SKENAZY**

Stephen Lynch has never had a home. Sure, he lived with his parents, growing up in Missouri, Kansas and Boise and finally a camper unit behind his father's house in Spokane, Wash. And, yes, he's rented rooms all over the place. From a basement with two small windows and a patchwork of white carpet, to garages and spare bedrooms from San Francisco to Fresno.

But the 50-year-old has never lived alone, or with the space his art requires. His art, which is currently on display at the Museum of Art & History and the neighboring retail store, VinoCruz, is part of the Assemblage+Collage+Construction art exhibit going on countywide. His work—about 13 pieces at VinoCruz and one at the museum—are a reflection of his meandering, cramped life style—small-sized selections of artwork.

Lynch's art, however, and his living arrangements, are about to change as the artist moves into the new Tannery Arts Center.

His first steps toward moving into the Tannery began at 4 a.m. on Saturday Nov. 1, when "they" began showing up in their cars; "they" being a slew of artists who were lined up to apply for housing at the Tannery—a development project focused on creating accessible, sustainable homes and work space for local artists.

Lynch got there at 5 a.m. and hopped in line behind 25 other people who were

just like him—passionate people representing all walks of life, hoping for a new home. The line wasn't supposed to start until 8 a.m. on Sunday morning. So, clutching cups of coffee, blankets and lawn chairs, they started an unofficial line across the street.

"They had set it up so that the line was really wide because they knew that people were going to camp out," Lynch says. "There was all of this food provided—it was like a huge party that lasted for 48 hours. It's going to be a really cool community to live and work with."

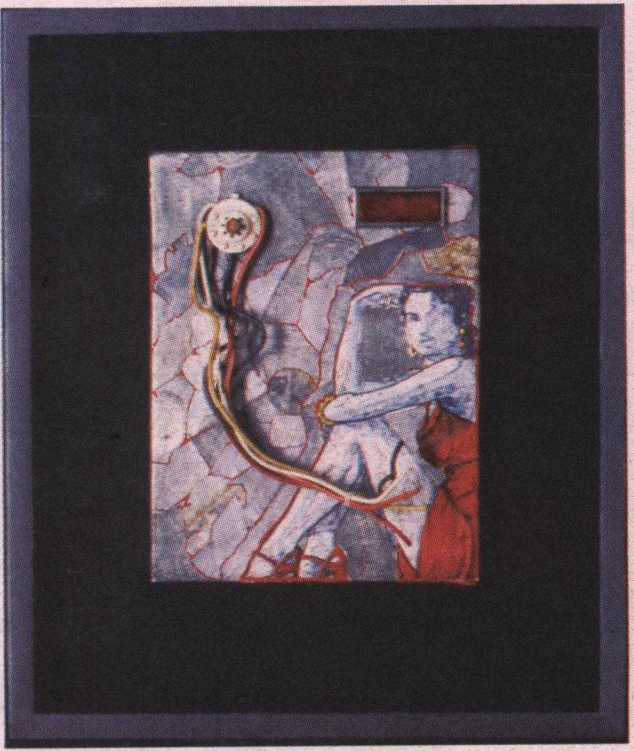
The Tannery received over 400 applications, and with only 100 units there is sure to be a wait list for years to come. Lynch was one of the lucky 100 accepted.

"All of my art spaces have been my bedrooms," Lynch says. "Which has led to my work being of smaller scale. I'm looking forward to the opportunity to work on bigger pieces."

Lynch applied for a studio space on the third floor of the live/work housing. If he gets his way, he'll have a high, 18-foot ceiling, and a long window along the side with an inspirational view of the hills—a stark contrast to the poorly-lit basements with low ceilings that forced him to hang his bigger canvasses on his ceiling when not working on them. He hopes to move into his new studio by the end of February.

Lynch's art falls somewhere in between assemblage and construction. His

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TALES FROM THE TANNERY "Hardwired?" by Stephen Lynch.

current work, the Lead Canvas Series, was forged out of old lead wine foils and encaustic wax, creating pieces simultaneously unique and familiar, thanks to his use of recycled materials.

He developed his unorthodox style while working at a gilding shop in San Francisco. Gilding is the art of overlaying or covering something with gold leaf.

The main guildler also worked in graffito, a technique of ornamentation in which a surface layer of paint or plaster is incised to reveal a ground of contrasting color.

The pieces exude a sense of handiwork that only comes from years of working with and relying upon one's hands.

Lynch works and talks with his hands, moving them this way and that while describing the many ways they have been put to use throughout his life.

"I've been a picture framer," Lynch says, "a leather crafter, a dishwasher, a guitar French-polish finisher, a plastic fabricator, a woodcarver. Right now I work for the post office, but come summertime I'll be desperately looking for work, trying to support my art."

Appropriately, Lynch began his art career as an illustrator, designing different forms of United Way's open hand logo. "After illustrating for United Way and then going to the Academy [of Art in San Francisco] I realized that I didn't want to do other people's stuff anymore," Lynch says, laughing. "I wanted to figure out what I want to do."

The next phase of Lynch's life looks like it's right on track to correlate with the next phase of the Tannery development. Because what he wants to do, besides make his art, is try his hand at teaching art to children, something he hasn't done since he was in college.

Phases two and three of the development process at the Tannery will consist of fleshing out the Working Studios and a Performing Arts Center respectively. The Performing Arts Center will consist of classrooms and a community theater to facilitate a forum for the community to enjoy the creativity and artistic environment bolstered by the Tannery.

"Art gets stomped out of people," Lynch says, "because they think that they're not gifted, or they're not talented, or they're not qualified in all these ways that our culture says you have to qualify. You don't need those qualifications; all you need is the tenacity to stick with it."

Learn more about the Tannery at tanneryartscenter.org/, and learn more about Stephen Lynch by searching his name at artwanted.com.