

ARTIST COLONY

'I'm really grateful for what many people made financially and politically possible for this to take place.'

JONATHAN CHORN, Tannery resident



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Sculptor Jonathan Chorn has one of his pieces hanging outside his Tannery Arts Center apartment/studio.

The Tannery

ONE YEAR LATER



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Figurative artist Majio had never lived in an apartment setting until she moved to the Tannery Arts Center a year ago. She says she loves it now.

Subsidized arts center celebrates collaborative effort

Tanneries

By SHANNA MCCORD

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SANTA CRUZ — Jonathan Chorn and Lisa Silas fell in love while studying figurative sculpture at Italy's Florence Academy of Art. The couple married, had a child and moved to Davenport with their young son Arlo to make a life with art.

That life, the couple said, turned out to be harder than they imagined as rents run high and decent-paying artist jobs are scarce in Santa Cruz County.

Chorn, 31, and Silas, 41, got a break last year when they were selected to move into the Tannery Arts Center, a subsidized artist colony on Highway 9 near Harvey West that is the result of a

IF YOU GO

ONE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF TANNERY ARTS CENTER

WHAT: Celebration and open house
WHEN: Noon-9 p.m. Saturday
WHERE: Tannery Arts Center, Highway 9 near Harvey West, Santa Cruz
CONTACT: www.tanneryartscenter.org

collaborative effort that began in 2005 between city leaders and Minneapolis-based nonprofit Arts Space.

"We had to figure out how to live here and support ourselves," said Chorn, who hails from South Africa. "This place helped us financially, for sure. We couldn't get this place otherwise and pay the rent we pay."



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Majio was still moving into her Tannery Arts Center apartment/studio last June when a Sentinel photographer wandered by with a camera.

Saturday marks the one-year anniversary for the opening of the 100 low-income apartments, which organizers say will be a celebration of the years of planning and construction it took to make the Tannery Arts Center a reality.

The Chorn-Silas family lives in a three-bedroom apartment with high ceilings and a balcony overlooking the San Lorenzo River at the sprawling 8-acre campus. A portion of the living room is set aside for sculpting clay, tables, painting easels and their various art tools.

"Everyone is struggling here," Silas said. "I'm really grateful for what many people made financially and politically possible for this to take place."

The \$55 million arts campus was built on property that had been the longtime home of Salz Tannery, a leather-making factory that closed in 2001.

The Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency bought the land for \$6 million in 2006 and immediately went to work cleaning the property of the chemicals

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TANNERY

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and contaminants left from the days of making leather. The agency leases the property to Arts Space for \$1 a year.

Chorn and Silas, who pay less than \$1,000 a month for their 1,200-square-foot apartment, are among

the 260 low-income artists, including 50 children, who reside in the below-market units.

Rent for the apartments, which range in size from studios to three-bedrooms, is based on a tenants' income.

There are no vacancies and a "significant" waiting list is in place, organizers said.

"We saw this as a real opportunity for cultural enrichment as

we were losing artists in Santa Cruz County because of affordability issues," said Emily Reilly, who supported the project while serving the City Council until 2008 and now sits on the Tannery's 21-member board.

"The idea was how can we create a campus that brings together the need for affordable housing for artists, the need for affordable studio space, the need for office

space for nonprofits and the need for a performing venue in the county."

The \$40 million low-income apartments for artists was paid for largely through federal tax credits for Arts Space and low-interest commercial loans. No money came from the city's general fund.

The next phase of the campus, \$7 million for working studios, is

under way.

The final phase, a performing arts center, is in the middle of a fundraising campaign to generate about \$8 million for the center that would include a 230-seat theater.

The project, organizers say, represents a "first-in-the-nation art community that provides a sustainable, accessible and vibrant home for the arts in Santa Cruz County."