

Wave of art washes into Capitola

Art + Artists 1990

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New art galleries in the village add a flourish to business climate

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CAPITOLA — The opening of three new galleries in Capitola Village is changing the landscape of this seaside town.

The picturesque beach and quaint village have long been a colorful scene to paint, but the wave of new galleries has sparked an art revival.

In the last several weeks, the neighborhood has turned into a place for art lovers to view and buy original work.

From watercolors to oil paintings, art has found a new home.

"We've been missing galleries here for so long," said Bonnie Stiles Carr, who opened Stiles &

Strong Gallery-by-the Sea on Nov. 20.

Stiles Carr is a popular local artist who has created a painting for the 1992 Begonia Festival poster.

Tired of not having a place to show her work, she opened the gallery at 411 Capitola Ave. with art instructor Bonnie Armstrong. The gallery also features the work of other local artists.

Armstrong, who was Stiles Carr's first painting teacher, holds classes in the gallery.

Three doors down, The Gallery at Soquel Landing opened the week before Christmas.

"One art gallery by itself can't

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Bonnie Stiles Carr runs her business and her brush.

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make it," said owner Kathleen E. King, a Capitola native.

Stiles & Strong inspired her to open her own gallery.

"It all fit together," said King, whose gallery features local and regional artists.

The building used to be home to the Plum Tree gift shop years ago and served as the studio for owner Bernie Waymire. A painting by Waymire hangs in the new gallery, adding a touch of local history.

Local artist Sally Bookman plans to open a third showroom, Capitola Fine Arts Gallery, in the village this spring. It will be located a few blocks away at 109 Capitola Ave.

"All three will cooperate to create an art climate for Capitola Village," Bookman said.

The village is home to dozens of restaurants and stores, but the addition of the galleries makes the area more of a destination, according to King.

Art enthusiasts are more likely to stop in Capitola if there is a

group of galleries, not just one, she said.

"Now with so much talent in the county, it has exploded," said Bookman. "Capitola is the mecca."

Bookman said her gallery will feature her original watercolors along with local scenes by other painters.

Stiles & Strong features contemporary original paintings and a few sculptures and prints.

The Gallery at Soquel Landing also showcases regional artists, carrying a variety of styles in watercolors, gouache, pen and ink, etchings and sculpture.

Commercial districts survive against competition from shopping malls because they are unique, according to Dean Schwanke, director of development information services for the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C.

Entertainment and art galleries can provide that unique character, he said.

"It is a trend for the area," said Carin Hanna, owner of the near-

by Craft Gallery and former city councilwoman.

Hanna said she is thrilled about the opportunities the galleries bring to the village, including art walks in the summer.

Also applauding is the Capitola Arts Commission.

"The commission is pleased to see not one but two open and another planned," said commission president Sam Storey.

For Capitola, art studios are as natural as the city's scenic coastline.

The Chamber of Commerce sponsors the annual Art and Wine Festival that attracts thousands of people to the village to see work done by more than 150 artists and crafts people.

The Arts Commission is hoping to host an exhibit with the Capitola Historical Museum, located across the street from the two newly opened galleries.

The commission already promotes a cultural event in the summer with its twilight concert series in the district.