

On Business: VILLAGE ART CIRCLE AND GALLERY

Village Art Circle gallery opens in downtown Cary

New studio is third in downtown shopping center

By CINDY SCHAEFER
Correspondent

CARY JJ Jiang knows that when opportunity knocks, you have to be ready. So when he learned at the end of March that the ideal space to carry out his dream was available to lease in Ashworth Village, he didn't hesitate.

Village Art Circle Studio and Gallery is the third in a row of art galleries at the downtown Cary shopping center, which is near the Cary Arts Center. Its grand opening celebration was June 28 during the Cary Art Loop's Final Friday Art Crawl.

Jiang said he sees nothing but good coming from the abundance of artists working in close proximity.

"There is an abstract gallery, a co-op and now Village Art Circle," he said. "The Circle is different from the other places. It is a place to create, to work, to learn and to exhibit."

Explaining his vision, Jiang points to the name. He describes the Circle as a place to showcase artists' works as well as a place for artists to find support and a place for people who love art to gather.

"The support among artists is most important to me," he said.

A twice-monthly artists' roundtable provides opportunities for peer critique and discussion. And it's a rare chance for amateur artists to get feedback from professionals. Anyone interested in art is welcome to attend.

So far, the response has been overwhelming. The Circle has reached its current capacity of 17 member artists – all local, Jiang is quick to point out.

The 1,700-square-foot space displays ceramic and glass works and jewelry. Paintings line the



Owner JJ Jiang says he wants Village Art Circle in downtown Cary to be a place where artists and art-lovers can gather.

walls. Jiang said the open space is ideal for special events as well as classes.

Class offerings will vary depending on artist expertise and availability. Jiang said the Circle will be a rare local venue to provide serious classical training, including figurative art classes that feature nude models.

"It is very private," he said. "We are very careful about who participates."

The Circle classes are open only to adults.

Jiang's evolution as a force in the local art community was a natural progression, he said. A native of China, he came to the United States in 1990 to study architecture.

He later spent 15 years in Hong Kong working in architectural presentation before settling his family in Cary.

"My background prepared me for this," Jiang said of his new venture.

He is accomplished in drawing and painting and taught classes at

Village Art Circle and Gallery

Location: Ashworth Village, 200 S. Academy St., Cary.

Contact: 919-614-1890, villageartcircle@gmail.com

Online: www.villageartcircle.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday; check Web site for class times.

the former Jordan Hall Arts Center and Cary Arts Center. He was a founding member of Waverly Artists Group.

Downtown Cary should be a destination, Jiang said, and a vibrant arts community could make it that. He said the various groups will collaborate and feed off each other.

During next month's Lazy Daze, Jiang will open the gallery to visitors.

"We will open up and let people flow through. This will enhance the arts festival."