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Artist Helen Lessick, left, and gallery co-owner James Rojas install exhibit of Lessick's artwork – "The Human Condition" at Gallery 727 in downtown Los Angeles. The exhibit continues through March 6. A reception is scheduled at Gallery 727, at 727 Spring St., from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 5.



PHOTO BY ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

A Gallery Grows on Spring Street: Dream Comes True for MTA Planner

By ADRIENNE FIGUEROA

(Feb. 3, 2004) More than a year ago, MTA Transportation Planner James Rojas would peer through the dingy windows of a vacant storefront in his loft building with dreams of transforming it into an art gallery.

"The space showed great potential with its large floor areas, 20-feet high walls and location well served by public transit," recalls Rojas, project manager for Transportation Development and Implementation on the Central Area Team.

Four months later, in April 2003, the doors of Gallery 727 opened in downtown Los Angeles. The inception of the gallery – appropriately named for



PHOTO BY GAYLE ANDERSON

Opening night drew raves from an appreciative art crowd at Gallery 727, the latest addition to downtown's newest phenomenon, Gallery Row.

its location at 727 Spring St. – was marked by a conversation Rojas had with his landlord.

The landlord had considered creating a new function for the unused space, which had been used as a garment factory many years ago. When Rojas approached him with the gallery idea, he was eager to rent the space.

A promise given

"He told me, 'James, if you can put a gallery in here, I'll give it to you for half price,'" Rojas says with a smile.

Rojas collaborated with co-owners and longtime friends Adrian Rivas and Justin De Leon to open the newest addition to Gallery Row – an area of Spring Street near the Fashion District.

Now through March 6, the trio will be showing "The Human Condition," an exhibit of abstract artwork of MTA Art Collection Manager Helen Lessick. A reception is scheduled at Gallery 727 from 11 a.m. until 2 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 5.

Lessick's work features a variety of suspended torsos made of steel plumbers tape and clothing made from sheer fabric from a canopy bed.

'Doing something unusual'

"A lot of what my artwork is involves taking common material and doing something unusual with it," she says. Lessick, who earned degrees in fine art at Reed College in Portland and at the University of California in Irvine, has been involved in installation art for 25 years.

In addition to conveying a message about elements of human growth and interpersonal relationships, Lessick also pays homage to the seamstresses who worked in the space by hanging an assortment of outfits in the front windows.

"This installation was designed to reflect the people who once used that space," she says.

Lessick, whose artwork has been shown around the world, hopes the exhibit at Gallery 727 will provide the chance to meet a new group of artists and art enthusiasts.

"I'm glad I have the opportunity to show my artwork and partake in that energy that is revitalizing the downtown area," she says.