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Sketchbook
New Gallery's Growing Roster Is Shaking Up Local Art Scene
By Robin Updike
Seattle Times Art Critic

With Linda Farris' gallery gone, and two of the city's art museums closed for renovation, one of the most-anticipated art events of the spring will be the opening of Meyerson & Nowinski Art Associates, the new gallery organized by former Immunex chief and longtime art collector Robert Nowinski.

Originally scheduled to open in March at 123 S. Jackson St., Nowinski now says the opening will be in late April. Remodeling on the 5,000-square-foot site at 123 S. Jackson St. started last week and will take eight to 10 weeks to complete, he said.

Of interest to many in the Seattle art scene is the gallery's growing roster of 24 artists. About half come from Farris' stable of mostly mid-career, Seattle-based artists.

New to Seattle

But the gallery also is picking up artists from the Northwest and elsewhere who haven't been represented in Seattle before. Some of the most notable are Robert Helm, the much-praised Eastern Washington painter who's had solo museum shows at the Tacoma Art Museum and in other parts of the country but who's never had a Seattle gallery, and Masami Teraoka, a Los Angeles painter with a growing national reputation.

People also are talking about some of the defections from other Seattle galleries to Meyerson & Nowinski. Like athletes and actors who are represented by agents, artists can and do switch galleries from time to time depending on who they think will best promote their work and their careers. Still, in Seattle's relatively kid-glove gallery scene, actively wooing artists away from well-established galleries is something new.

Artists who've left galleries to sign on with Meyerson & Nowinski are Alden Mason, one of the area's veteran painters who long has been represented by Greg Kucera Gallery; sculptor Brad Rude, formerly with Foster/White Gallery; and painter Stephen McClelland, formerly with the William Traver Gallery.

The gallery also is signing up less well-known, but promising emerging artists who either weren't previously represented or who were with galleries that, like Farris', now no longer exist. They are sculptor Amanda Fin; painter Johnine Majchrowicz; Jim Rittimann, a guy who creates skeletons of creepy-crawly creatures that never existed; and painter Collin Shutz.

ArtFair show

Meyerson & Nowinski will show off their wares at ArtFair/Seattle next week. Besides displaying work by some of their contemporary artists, Nowinski plans to promote the modern-master side of his business by bringing works ranging from paintings by 19th-century American impressionist William Merrit Chase to work by acclaimed Bay Area artist Wayne Thiebaud.

"We want to give a feel for the cross section of 19th- and 20th-century American and European work we'll be showing," said Nowinski. "We don't know if any of it will sell at ArtFair, but we at least want to give people a sense of what we're doing."

In a turn of events that the Henry Art Gallery says has to do with Nowinski's long association with the Henry (he's a member of the Henry's board of trustees), and the fact that the Henry is closed, the Henry's annual gala fund-raiser will be held at Meyerson & Nowinski in mid-April. The gallery will open to the public about a week later and will participate in the First Thursday gallery walk on May 2.

The two opening shows (the plan is to always have simultaneous shows of contemporary work and work by modern masters), will be a group show of figurative work by six of the gallery's artists, and a show called "Picasso and Friends," which Nowinski says will be mostly figurative work.