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ART

ON THE MOVE

LONG BEFORE THE YUPPIES began to move into the South End, it was discovered by local artists. The rents were low and the buildings offered plenty of light. Now art galleries are setting up shop there. In 1974 the Mills Gallery came to 549 Tremont Street; then, five months ago, the WET Gallery went into business at 542 Columbus Avenue. This month both Vision and Akin galleries are opening; and next month a fifth, the Hoyle Gallery, will open.

The South End gallery owners have already formed the South End Gallery Association, which will help them to coordinate openings, according to Marilu Szelc, co-owner with Michael Lannon of the WET Gallery.

Why the interest? Affordable rents, say gallery owners Brent Sikkema and Ali Righter. Rents on Newbury Street are about \$65 a square foot; in the South End they're about \$7. "It's such a relief to get [the high overhead] off your back," says Sikkema. "So many people are

slaves to the landlord." Sikkema's Vision Gallery, now located at 560 Harrison Avenue, specializes in nineteenth- and twentieth-century fine-art photographs. It reopens September 10 with a retrospective of the work of Boston-born photographer Paul Capenigro.

Ali Righter, who used to run Gallery 52, on Beacon Hill, thought for a time of opening her new Akin Gallery on Newbury Street, but the need for lower rent led her to the South End. "I've been unable to find an affordable price on Newbury Street for a year," she says. "I just think that the South End is the up-and-coming part of Boston." The Akin Gallery has moved to 476 Columbus Avenue (formerly the location of the Harris Brown Gallery) and opens on September 9 with a show of works by local abstract painters Laura Allis and Nan Tull and realist John Stockwell.

Owners of all five galleries say they will focus on local artists. Szelc and Lannon of the WET Gallery open their fall lineup with Dorchester artist Vytas Sakalas, who does metal cutouts and oil paintings on aluminum.

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