

## Gallery's Goal is to Get Artists 'Out There'

Shannon Eblen

Lexington is home to a vibrant art community yet has often lacked the resources that allow the artists widespread recognition. That is exactly what Phillip March Jones intends to change.

Jones recently opened Institute 193, a non-profit downtown art space on North Limestone that will exhibit not only the work of local artists, but print books, essays, posters and other materials. The books are modeled after those found in major galleries in cities like New York or Paris and will be widely available. of a national dialogue," Jones said.



The inaugural exhibit at Institute 193 is an installation from the archives of artist Louis Bickett. He has saved and catalogued all of his belongings – and more – for 37 years.

"The goal is to get artists out there and be part of a national dialogue," Jones said.

What differentiates Jones' space from other galleries is that the major intent is not to sell the art. The main idea, he said, is to "organize and package the work in such a way that people take it seriously."

Institute 193's opening exhibit is a sampling of the work of Louis Bickett, a prominent figure among Lexington artists. "Louis is a natural choice because everyone knows him," Jones said.

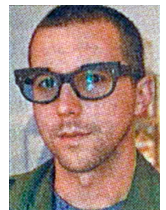
What makes his work an even more natural fit for the space is that Bickett lives and works in the apartment above Institute 193.

And now with Louis Zoellar Bickett II: *Selections From the Archive*, the public can see 37 years of his work in progress.

Bickett has been carefully organizing and labeling his every belonging since 1972. Gifts, photographs, crutches, crucifixes, postcards, receipts, even water and soil samples. You name it, it's there, carefully catalogued and poetically titled.

"It's always a collaborative effort between myself and the artist," Jones said, describing himself as more of an editor than a curator. He has worked with Bickett to select the work for the exhibit. "The goal is for this to be a glimpse into his process and what he does, and not highlight specific projects."

For this reason, Institute 193 worked hard until Thursday's opening to reproduce the shelving in Bickett's apartment and give the installation an authentic touch.



Phillip March Jones wants his gallery to advance artists' careers.

What will be on display is only a cross-section of the entire body of Bickett's work. "Everything you see, there are dozens and dozens, and sometimes hundreds," Bickett said.

"Influence for this came from a federal tax audit where I had to be organized," he recalled. "When I showed up with 15 binders, he (the auditor) was astonished."

Bickett says he has thrown away few receipts since. "It's proof not only of my existence, but the fact that what I do is a business, even if I don't make money off of it," Bickett said.

He looks over the pieces arranged against one of the gallery walls. Scanning the Muslim prayer rug, the Patty Hearst poster ("that's probably worth some money," he says), the photo of a Polish boy, he identifies some things as gifts, some as finds, some as family items, adding that "things naturally accumulate."

Many things he comes across in travel, which is one of his main influences, as are religions and World War II. In his travels, he sends postcards to himself to add to the collection. "Sometimes I write haikus on them," Bickett said.

He has not exhibited in Lexington for a while, though his work has been seen at 21C Museum Hotel and the Speed Art Museum in Louisville.

Jones had approached him about a show in the past, but Bickett wasn't convinced until he saw Jones' gallery work in Paris. "I came upon his business card when I was in Paris," Bickett said. "I went to the gallery, and it was just perfect."

"I think what he is doing here is one of the most significant things ever to happen to the Lexington art scene," Bickett said. "I think the books will be his lasting legacy, and that's the reason I wanted to get involved to begin with."

During the installation, Louis watches as the shelves are carefully fitted together after being shaped by the power saw on the floor.

"I did all of mine with a hand saw, like Jesus would have done," Bickett said of his shelves.

Jones replies, "Louis, you just have a precision the rest of us lack."