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Arts Bloom in Inglewood, Calif.

By SAM LUBELL

Over the years restless artists have established new creative districts around Los Angeles, from downtown to Santa Monica to Culver City to Chinatown. The latest is in an unlikely place: Inglewood.

This working-class city of about 110,000 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles is known for the Great Western Forum, where Magic Johnson's Lakers took home countless titles; for Hollywood Park thoroughbred racetrack, scheduled to close at the end of the year; for amazing soul-food restaurants; and for the original Randy's Donuts, a drive-in with a 30-foot-tall replica of, yes, a doughnut on its roof.

But in recent years, this slice of suburbia has become a haven for visual artists hoping to escape the high prices, homogeneity and elitism of more established arts districts. One indication of Inglewood's rising cultural star is its annual [Open Studios](#), a weekend-long event in November (Nov. 9 and 10 this year) that is drawing art lovers to the city. When Open Studios began in 2006 the event had seven participating artists. Last November the number was hovering around 50.

"The artists here have been under the radar for a lot of years," said Renée Fox, an East Coast transplant who helped found and organize Open Studios. "It's almost our duty to have people see the cool aspects of this place."

Inglewood's creative class is scattered around the city, from cinder-block warehouses to '50s-era bungalows to a former military parts plant (in the case of the local artist and architect Chris Mercier, whose three-dimensional pieces skirt the line between sculpture and architecture). But outside of Open Studios, the best places to visit are the biggest art collectives — the Beacon Arts Building and 1019 West. Both were opened in 2010 by the local entrepreneur Tony Kouba. Visitors can arrange tours with artists and check for events via the Web sites for each of the buildings ([Beaconartsbuilding.com](#) and [1019west.com](#)).

The Beacon, a cavernous 32,000-square-foot space at 808 North La Brea Avenue, was once home to the Bekins Moving and Storage Company. With its striking concrete columns and hum of activity, the industrial building has become a hot destination. The building has a gallery space that hosts pop-up shows, including an exhibition for Open Studios artists last fall that featured abstract paintings, off-kilter sculptures and a mannequin of a woman — striped like a zebra, draped on a sofa. The Beacon is now home to more than 30 artists.

One of the Beacon's artists, Emily Nyburg, came to Inglewood from New York. She was drawn by the community's diversity and friendliness. "I can be myself here," she said. "There's no pressure." Her work merges painting, architecture, clothing, accessories and furniture. A purse, priced at \$950, is fitted with a host of zippers that resemble a jacket; a painting is composed of shards of tattered cloth. Down the hall another artist, Lisa Soto, spins intricate "wire drawings" of wire, Mylar, graphite and charcoal.

Ms. Fox, whose haunting, close-up paintings of flowers and other botanicals line the walls of her nearby home and studio, said the quality of the art is not surprising. The Beacon's owners, with her input, chose artists based on the strength of their work. "We didn't want to dilute the talent," she said. "We're all very serious about what we do here."

Still, Ms. Fox said, "When I mention Inglewood, people still give me this blank look like, huh?" About two miles west of the Beacon, two blocks from Randy's Donuts, is 1019 West, which is inside what was one of the city's first Volkswagen dealerships. It is home to about 40 artists and counting.

This arts enclave has attracted some well-known practitioners like the installation specialist Pontus Willfors, whose work includes a salvaged wood sculpture that resembles a giant tree, and the painter Scott Grieger, whose cheeky work (a world map made of baloney called "Globaloney") dates back to the early 1970s. It's also a huge draw for students at the nearby Otis College of Art and Design.

Michael Massenberg, an artist who has lived in Inglewood for 20 years and is a member of the local arts group [Inglewood Cultural Arts](#), welcomes the bohemian newcomers who have set up shop in faded pockets of the city. "This is one of L.A.'s best kept secrets," he said. Perhaps not for long.