

the gallery | **art gallery: bering & james**Blakely Bering
and Austin James

IMMEDIATELY UPON ARRIVAL, I WAS GREETED WITH A PASSIONATE ENERGY THAT FLOWED THROUGH THE OWNERS, INTO THE GALLERY AND AROUND THE ART ON THE WALLS. THIS ENERGY COULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE HISTORIC BUILDING THAT WAS ONCE THE ORIGINAL ANTONE'S WAREHOUSE. (THE ORIGINAL ANTONE'S WAS LOCATED ON TAFT, NOW THE RESTAURANT GRAVITAS.) IT COULD BE LIKE WHAT ONE OF CO-OWNER AUSTIN JAMES' PROFESSORS SAID, THAT WHEN A TRUE ARTIST PAINTS, SOME OF THEIR CHI, OR ENERGY, STAYS WITH THE ART ILLUMINATING THE ENERGY. OR, IT COULD BE AS SIMPLE AS THE OWNERS, BLAKELY BERING AND AUSTIN JAMES, ARE EXTREMELY PERSONABLE, LIVELY AND PASSIONATE ABOUT TAKING ALL THE APPROPRIATE STEPS IN CREATING THIS NEW LOCATION FOR THEIR GALLERY. **WHATEVER THEORY YOU ENJOY, IT IS UNDENIABLE THAT BERING & JAMES IS VARIED AND ENERGETIC.**

The space is a 3500-sq.-ft. area with crisp white walls adorned with colorful art. "The space is amazing. It's in the middle of everything: Midtown, Downtown, Montrose, Memorial Heights, not that far from the Heights, and in the 019 ZIP code. **We're tucked away a little bit, but at the same time just right there – the perfect combination for an art gallery,**" says James. The initial attraction, however, was the huge 14-ft. east-facing window. Another factor that influenced the move from the 713-sq.-ft. space in Rice Village was that all the spaces in the renovated warehouse are "to the trade" businesses like carpet, furniture and framing available to interior designers, art consultants or business-to-business. Ninety percent of *Bering & James'* business is "to the trade." **Of course, individuals desiring original art are always welcome at the gallery!**

Since the new gallery came with space, the possibilities were endless. Originally, Blakely and Austin were only going to host 20 artists of contemporary abstract work. Along with their clients they decided that there was a need for realism. So, they added 10 more artists of contemporary landscapes. **"Houston is such an abstract town that there really isn't a young gallery doing contemporary land-**

scape. We are diversified," Bering says. Currently, the gallery hosts 22 artists; Blakely and Austin are two of them. They choose other artists based on belief in the work, liking the people and believing the work can be sold. When asked about their favorite art, James says, "I like color, energy, something you can feel." Bering said, "Happy, uplifting and color are the big determining factors. A piece that makes me feel good. I think there are so many unhappy things in the world that art should be a moment to escape to. We are in a position to provide people with that moment of escapism."

Bering & James has also teamed up with Masraff's, a restaurant on Post Oak Lane with American/South European cuisine, to cater and host any event for that unique occasion. They are currently adding a kitchen to allow Masraff's easy accessibility on site.

As well as reserved private parties, *Bering & James* hosts many other events, such as performances, art classes and special exhibits. Running until September 30 is *The Normal Heart*, a play presented by Theatre New West to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the discovery of AIDS.

Blakely Bering and Austin James met while doing benefits for The Women's Home. They are married and have a beautiful baby girl, Granger, who is their "finest masterpiece so far," according to the couple. **Most of the work they do is collaborative. Blakely is more mellow, while Austin is high energy.** Together they create "nice decorative work with a fine art edge." "We can work in a ton of styles. [Blakely] has her set of styles; I have my set of styles. You combine those and there's a multiplier effect," said James. Blakely and Austin have work in businesses around Houston, Austin, Dallas and Las Vegas. Bering said, "We live and breathe art seven days a week 24 hours a day."



bering and james had their Grand Opening August 19. The exhibition will continue until September 19. To contact the Gallery, find out about upcoming events or for more information, you can visit their website at www.beringand-james.com or call 713.524.0101.