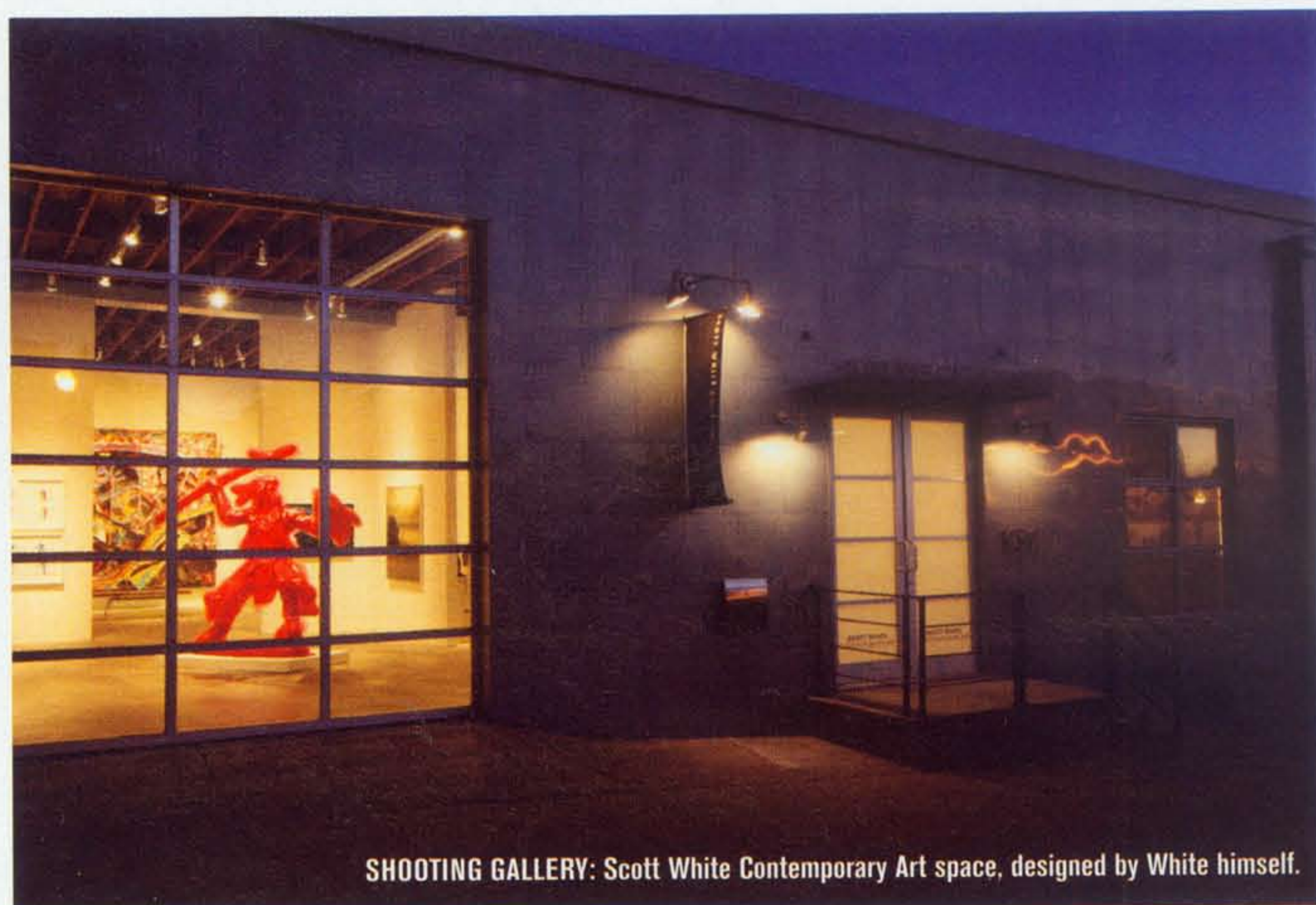


THE RADAR ART

BY ANNAMARIA STEPHENS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN DOLE



WHITE WALL: Scott White in front of his Frank Stella piece, "Mossport."



SHOOTING GALLERY: Scott White Contemporary Art space, designed by White himself.

SHOW WHITE

Scott White's new gallery cements Little Italy as S.D.'s art central. Stella, anyone?

A massive red Indian stands guard near the entrance of Scott White's relocated gallery in Little Italy. Yoram Wolberger's fiberglass sculpture, a rough-seamed, life-size play on the plastic toy (think 2-inch cowboys and Indians on oval bases), belongs to the gallery's inaugural group exhibition, which also includes a Willem de Kooning drawing and a Frank Stella piece that once hung in the Pompidou in Paris.

The space may be new, but White is no newcomer to the city's art scene. The 48-year-old has been dealing museum-quality artwork in San Diego since 1991, when he opened SOMA gallery in the Gaslamp. Back then, Downtown attracted more homeless than high-end collectors, but White managed to lure buyers with exhibitions focusing on mid-career and emerging artists. His Fourth Avenue tenure was brief, though—he'd spend the next 10 years in La Jolla before resettling in Little Italy.

"La Jolla is nice," says the affable, lanky White in his art-filled office. "But we like being part of the Downtown excitement. It's happening here."

White's new gallery space—an airy warehouse under the flight path where white walls pop against pale gray concrete and exposed wood—is a vast improvement over his former storefront at Kettner Avenue's half-empty, block-long Art Studio building. That was a temporary situation that leashed him to a five-year lease. Still, he points out, location isn't everything.

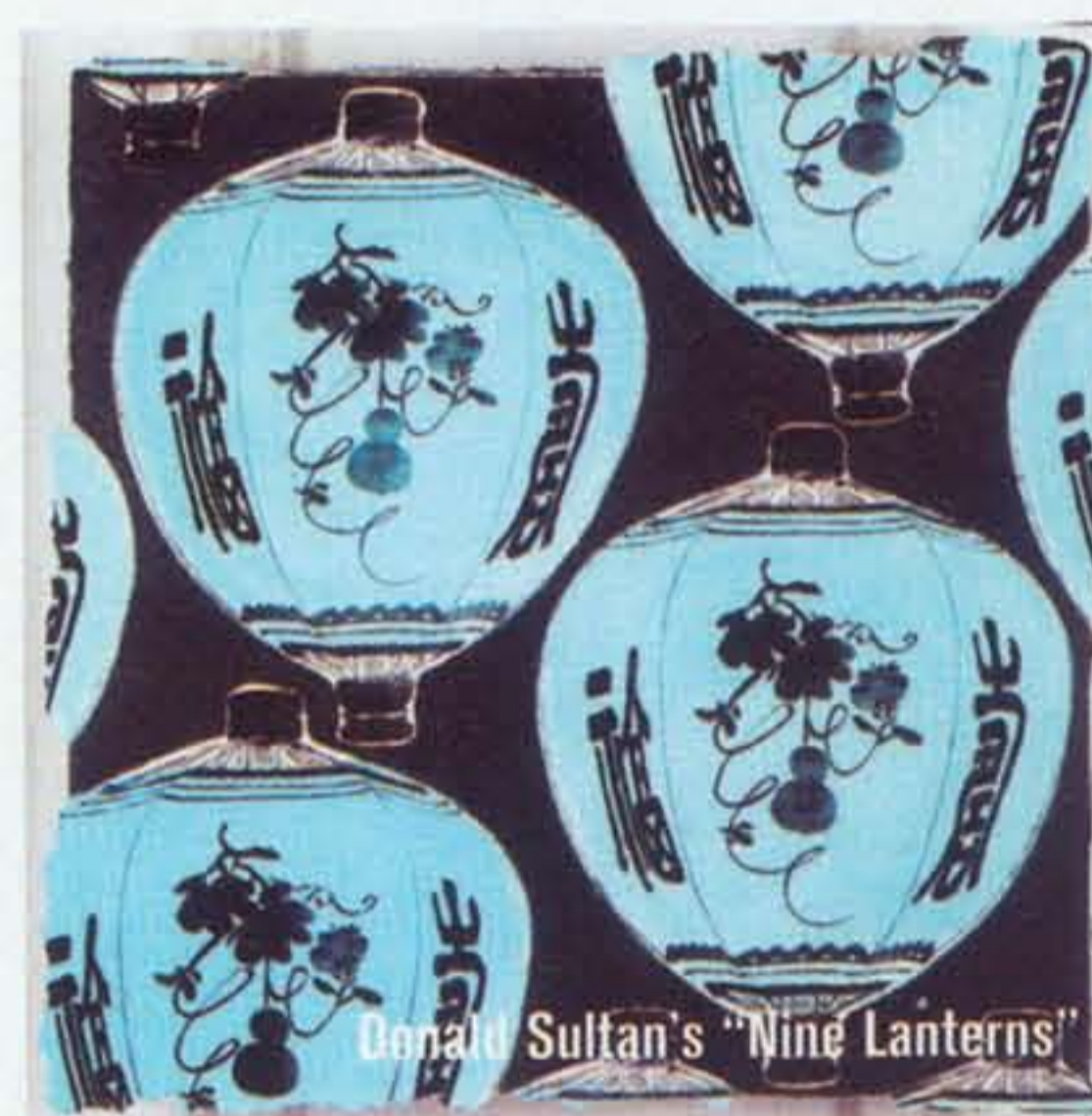
"We're not a tourist attraction," he explains. "We have a global audience.

We've built up a clientele over the past 30 years that includes collectors from La Jolla and Rancho Santa Fe and beyond. When people come by the gallery it's because it's a destination, not a walk-by."

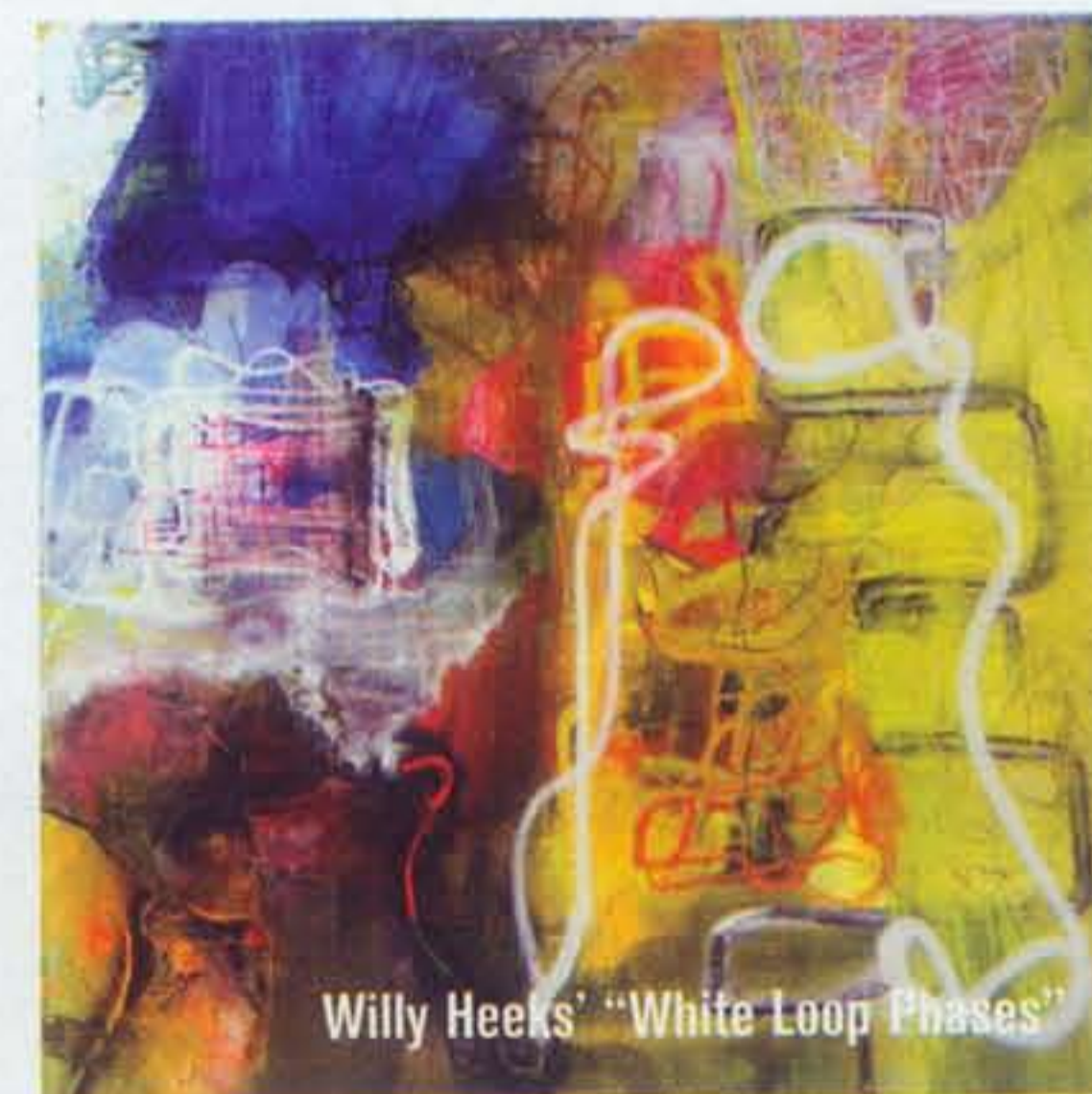
Three decades ago, before moving to San Diego on a whim after a weekend visit, the Detroit-born dealer was a professional studio musician in Los Angeles. He satiated his art lust with a day job at a gallery.

"It's really what I like," White enthuses. "I am a collector first and foremost. I caught the collecting bug from my mother, who was an antiques dealer."

White's eye for modern and contemporary art, says high-profile La Jolla collector Coop Coopriider, is impeccable. "Scott has always impressed us with his vision



Donald Sultan's "Nine Lanterns"



Willy Heeks' "White Loop Phases"

as a curator and with his business sense," offers Coopriider, whose wife Patti is a professional artist. The couple first discovered White during his Gaslamp days and have been loyal patrons ever since.

It's not just the blue-chip private and corporate collectors who keep Scott White Contemporary Art on speed dial. The gallery has also collaborated with MCASD and SDMA, and in November, White and the San Diego Unified Port District will stage a citywide exhibition of large-scale sculptures by world-renowned French artist Bernar Venet.

The writing's on the White walls: San Diego will be an international art center if this collector has anything to say about it. **R**

Scott White Contemporary Art, 939 Kalmia St., Little Italy, 619.501.5689.