

By ANDREA HOFFMAN

Artists have historically sought out lofts and factories in downtown areas in an effort to find spacious, low-cost studios. Especially in California and especially in the 1970's, these creative sanctuaries are fast disappearing.

"Artists Work Here" is an exhibition of artworks by nine artists with studios in downtown San Diego. The opening reception will be held from 7 to 10 p.m. tomorrow, with viewing on weekends from 1 to 5 p.m., through September 30 in a private studio at 433 G St.

This showing, funded by the artists themselves, is a timely effort to communicate to the public where they work and what they are doing. The Community Arts center and over 50 artists expect, for a variety of reasons, to lose their downtown locations as plans proceed for downtown redevelopment.

Four artists with studios in the old city hall building at Fourth Avenue and G Street say they either have lost their space or have been notified they must leave by January. The building is being renovated for use as condominiums, offices and restaurants. The Community Arts center is housed at Third Avenue and E Street in a building which was mandated a part of the Horton Plaza Redevelopment project before being turned over to the center on a temporary, month-to-month basis. Its future location is uncertain.

The downtown artists are not happy about the prospect of losing their center city locations. Some have invested thousands of dollars and hours in lighting and repairing their work space, thereby helping to revitalize a decaying section of the city, attracting people to its charms. They fear now that they, like artists in such redeveloping urban districts as the Soho area of New York, Philadelphia, and the Venice area of Los Angeles, will be forced to move when improving land values increase rents beyond the amount artists can afford to pay.

The high-ceilinged, 6,000-sq.-ft. basement-studio of painter Marjorie

Nodelman is the setting for this first in a series of alternative space exhibitions to be held downtown.

"Few galleries would show these works," says Lynn Schuette, an administrator at Community Arts and curator of the show. "I was interested in showing people taking risks in their work. Since it is closer to real art, it is not traditionally marketable."

Schuette's own work, "Artist 2 Artist 2 U," is imprinted on office memos (symbolic of tedium) which spell out a letter written by Sol LeWitt to Eva Hesse that gives the struggling artist encouragement. It is particularly appropriate to this exhibition, which may be viewed in juxtaposition to the prestigious

LeWitt show opening at the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art tonight — one night prior to the opening of "Artists Work Here."

Interesting both aesthetically and as a document of the downtown artist's experience, Juliette Mondot's color-xerox quilt entitled "Daydreams and Nightmares" is an autobiographical "soft painting" which describes the renovation of the F Street loft she shares with her husband, Greg Calvert. Their artistic life is presented as a separate world that somehow co-exists with the hard street-life below.

The most common link between these artworks is a current of social awareness that takes many forms. David Beck Brown's portraits of

inmates of the Metropolitan Correctional Center, shown with writings by the inmates, break through the impersonal wall between those on the inside and the viewer on the outside. These contrast starkly with Gloria Poore's images of the artist as a dreamer, or Susan Speirs Minnick's obscure allusions to feminism, philosophy and linguistics in her "Mothers: Triptych."

Two of Nodelman's large circular paintings from her Military Industrial Complex series make a head-on attack on war games through their centripetal approach to realism.

Along with Nodelman, Vince Torano, Mark Schweitzer and Barbara Sexton explore the shaped canvas

format. Sexton's Russian icon-inspired work and Schweitzer's expression of sexual tension are both attempts to create an interplay between canvas and wall by their use of unstretched canvas.

While many artists have talked about setting up their own shows, problems of expense, space and hanging usually defeat the completion of the project. However, the need exists. Universities, commercial galleries and juried shows do not allow for the quirky or unsaleable within their framework. Seldom is the public given such an opportunity to see experimental artwork outside of the controlled environment of a gallery or museum and in the place where the art is created.