



WORKING MAN Allan Rodewald's work floods his first-floor studio

CHEAP TRICK SAVVY SCAVENGER RODEWALD GAMBLED ON A BLIGHTED URBAN 'HOOD—AND WON. 'I PLAYED THE ARTIST CARD.'

BY DEBORAH MANN LAKE PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK THOMPSON

When he bought his little lot in the First Ward five years ago, muralist Allan Rodewald, 49, was told he was either a fool or a visionary. But he took the plunge, creating a thrifty-chic studio and home that thrills.

The once blighted area near Downtown is on the rise. Rodewald, who's painted murals for Houston City Hall and the Downtown Aquarium, made the right call. "I love the view of Downtown, I'm across from the police compound, and there's a Mexican bar next door!"

Rodewald needed a home in which to enjoy and create paintings, a mixture of representational and abstract images. He worked with builder Joe Wilburn and architect Burt Tibbets to make it happen.

The first floor of the three-level concrete-block building is a studio

with a wall of glass that reaches up to the second floor, and another two-story wall for hanging larger pieces. The second-floor living room and kitchen are in a balcony-like space with a great view. The third floor, containing his bedroom and bathroom, is one open space with a garden tub floating on one end against a slate wall. Originally the architect suggested putting a wall between the tub and the bedroom area, but Rodewald nixed that, feeling it would take away from the loft-like feeling.

His interior design is a combination of "found" or recycled pieces of furniture mixed with Tiffany glass, his colorful paintings and gifts from friends and family. "Rather than buying pieces, I like to collect them," he says. "They all have a story and that makes it more personal."