

Art on the move, this time to Dupont St.



Five galleries are fleeing high rents of Dundas and Queen, setting up shop near the unlikely intersection of Dupont and Dufferin.

By: [Murray Whyte](#) Visual arts, Published on Mon Jul 20 2015

“Road to Ruin” is the name of the inaugural exhibition at Cooper Cole gallery’s brand-new space on Dupont and Dufferin Sts., though its proprietor, Simon Cole, intends the opposite effect.

After years on Dundas West, the gallerist pulled up stakes and relocated to an unlikely spot, chased by escalating rents and a growing priority on late-night food and drink — especially drink — in his former neighbourhood.

He’s not alone: In the past couple of months, four other galleries — Erin Stump Projects, PM Gallery, Angell Gallery and Neubacher Shor — have begun their resettlement to this improbable nexus, anchored by the world-weary Galleria shopping centre on the southwest corner, a McDonald’s and a string of car audio and appliance warehouses.

There is already an artists’ presence here, though, with clusters of studios strung from Dovercourt Rd. west to Dundas. This recent influx only makes it official, and visible.

It comes as no surprise. Art has always nudged at the city’s frontiers in a predictable pattern of forced migration: Art moves in, imbuing a worn-at-the-corners neighbourhood with an

instant cache; new businesses follow, looking to capitalize on the sudden sheen, attracting new, more moneyed residents; rents go up; and art moves out.

This time could be different, with at least some of the new arrivals not renting their spaces but buying, and in one of the last affordable pockets of the semi-central city. What's certain, though, is change. With its stretch of underused storefronts, looming gigantic condominium developments and a modest but growing presence of new businesses starting to occupy them — across from Stump, an organic market is under renovation; espresso bars, most of them less than a couple of years old, are separated by less than a block — Dupont's time is coming. Some would say it's already here.

Simon Cole, Cooper Cole gallery

Moved: From 1161 Dundas St. W. to 1134 Dupont St., coopercolegallery.com

Cole, a staple of Dundas West since 2008, was the first of the crop of new pioneers to head north and his old neighbourhood's changing character was ample motivation.

"It became so nightlife-centric," he says. "I just didn't feel like the crossover was there anymore." He moved to his new space, a multi-level former credit union (complete with safe), not for cost reasons, though he allows it was a pre-emptive strike.

"I wanted to be the one making the decision to leave, before my landlord jacked the rent." He liked the space, with its architectural idiosyncrasies, and the practical benefits, too.

"I don't have drunk guys peeing on my doorstep anymore, which I like," he laughs. "Maybe we can't go for dinner on Dundas after an opening anymore, but I can live with that."



Simon Cole moved his Cooper Cole Gallery from Dundas St. W. to Dupont St. because the old neighbourhood became too "nightlife-centric."

The gallery's first show in the new space closes Saturday.

Jamie Angell, Angell Gallery

Moving: From 12 Ossington Ave. to 1444 Dupont St., angellgallery.com

Angell, who spent more than 10 years first on Queen St. W. and then around the corner on Ossington, could see the writing on the wall. His lease was coming due at the end of the year and he decided not to wait for the inevitable bad news. He bought a unit earlier this spring on Dupont, next to Boulderz, a rock-climbing club, in a light industrial development.

“The stress of renting got to be too much,” he says. “It’s a huge weight off my shoulders.” How huge? Angell’s Ossington rent was \$14,000 a month before any increase for next year. His monthly mortgage payment on the new space is less than half that.

“There’s a lot I can do with that,” he says. “I can treat my clients that much better.” Angell plans to open in the fall.



Jamie Angell decided not to wait for the inevitable rent increase before moving from Ossington to Dupont St., where he'll open Angell Gallery in the fall.

Erin Stump, Erin Stump Projects (ESP)

Moving: From 1450 Dundas St. W. to 1558 Dupont St., erinstumpprojects.com

Stump, who opened on Dundas West just a few years ago, had little intention of leaving. But her building sold earlier this year and the new owner had plans to occupy the space, leaving her no choice. She found a two-storey building with a storefront for sale on Dupont and was surprised to find she could afford to buy it. With a massive space in the rear — it was, long ago, an old tailor’s shop; local legend has it they made suits for Frank Sinatra — it’s almost triple her old gallery’s size, but that’s not her only rationale.

“You need to be where your peers are,” she says. “It’s not as simple as cheap show space; you want to have a sense of community. Dundas feels like it’s basically become Queen West. I want to be where the artists are.” Stump hopes to open as early as late this month.



Erin Stump moved her ESP gallery from Dundas West after just a few years when the building was sold and bought her own building on Dupont.

Powell MacDougall, PM Gallery

Moving: From 1518 Dundas St. W. to 1485 Dupont St., pmgallery.ca

After more than five years on Dundas West — and countless hours spent working on improvements to her landlord’s building — MacDougall found herself in the same old trap: with the building in great shape and the neighbourhood improving, her rent spiked and that was that.

“I’m kind of tired of moving every time a neighbourhood gentrifies,” she says. She’s relocated the gallery to a third-floor loft space as a collaborative effort with one of her artists. It’s a kind of wait-and-see — she’ll only stay a year — but given the sudden influx of peers all around, she’s looking to find long-term space nearby.



Gentrification and a rent increase drove Powell MacDougall and PM Gallery from Dundas West to a temporary space on Dupont St., but she's looking to find long-term space nearby.

Manny Neubacher and Anya Shor, Neubacher Shor Contemporary

Moving: From 5 Brock Ave. to 230 Emerson Ave., neubachershor.com

After almost five years near the increasingly hectic Parkdale hub of Queen St. and Brock Ave., Neubacher and Shor looked north.

“It was the same old story: rent’s going to more than double,” Neubacher says. Their landlord didn’t say as much, but with the burgeoning hipification of Queen a few doors away, “it was an educated guess,” he says.

Shor agrees. “We didn’t even ask, because there wasn’t a point.” On Emerson, a short dead end north off Dupont, they found a low-slung one-storey brick building that most recently served as a motorcycle repair shop. Cutting their rent almost in half — \$3,500 versus \$6,500 per month — means the couple can abandon the necessary evil of their old business model: renting their space out on weekends for special events to make ends meet. “It’s a relief,” Shor says. “Now we can just concentrate on the art.”



Manny Neubacher and Anya Shor anticipated the inevitable rent increase when they moved their Neubacher Shor gallery from the "hipification" of Queen W. to a space for a little more than half the rent on Emerson, a short dead end north off Dupont.