

Out of orbit

After much searching, Revolving Museum settles into South Boston site

Music

By MARY JO PALUMBO

The Revolving Museum has landed. After 14 years of mounting art installations in abandoned spaces around Boston, Jerry Beck has just finished renovating three floors of a large brick warehouse at 300 A St. in South Boston. The bright, freshly painted space features two galleries, a small performance space, a large workshop space, a small experimental gallery for youths and more than 50 studios for artists.

An open house tonight features the inaugural art exhibit "Comets in Clothing," a group show with visual, performance and video art.

The show also includes a series of edible art

installations created with students from Roxbury — a miniature bakery made from cookies and dough, a mural made with burned toast and a shark made from matzo crackers.

"We see this as a unique museum," said Beck. "It's a laboratory and a model for young people coming in. We have a vision here to try and develop public art based on interaction with neighborhoods and community. We want it to be a real public museum, not an esoteric institution for the elite. Boston needs an alternative museum for new talent."

Since 1984, Beck has created large-scale collaborative art projects in both abandoned spaces and traditional venues and often incorporates works by youths and the disabled.

His first show was held in 12 abandoned railroad cars in a parking lot off Northern Avenue. In 1992, Beck orchestrated a

three-day festival at the Boston Center for the Arts where more than 1,000 young people and artists collaborated to create games, murals and performance art pieces. His "Pie in the Sky" project at the Institute of Contemporary Art featured an edible art project by 30 youths that explored pie as a metaphor for identity and raised money for Rosie's Place.

In 1995, his "Pinball ARTcade" at the BCA featured a carnival of arcade games by more than 40 artists. He also has converted an ice cream truck into a roving art mobile for children.

But after more than a decade of project by project installations, Beck believes it is time for his concept of an urban museum to find a home. And he's working to make that happen with a new framework for institutional growth.

Income from studio rentals and a recent

\$50,000 grant from the Boston Foundation have contributed to a \$200,000 annual budget. The museum now has nonprofit status and a six-member board. Beck has recently hired full-time managing director Diane Michalowski and program director Bo Lembo and hopes to build more staffing.

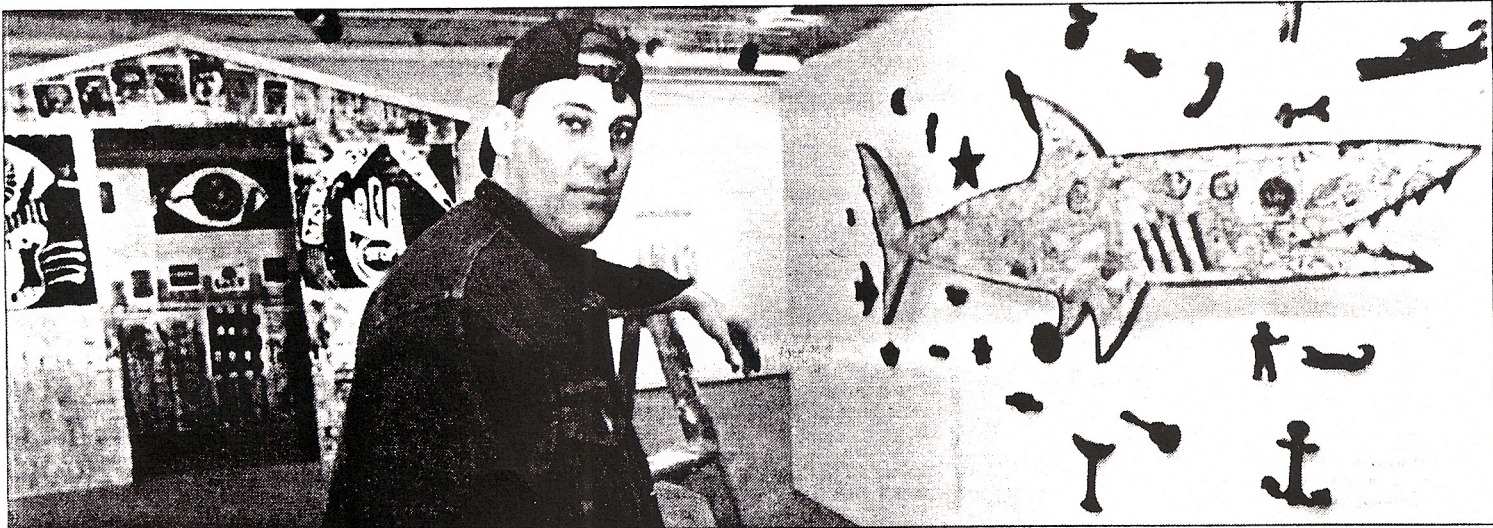
Exhibits are planned in the new space through May 1999 and include a haunted house at Halloween, a dance performance and a father/daughter art exhibit next spring.

"We re-evaluated and took a leap into being year-round presenters," said Beck. "We're developing our public art program and moving toward a very permanent organizational structure. We want to be around for a long time."

"Comets in Clothing" through Aug. 4 at the Revolving Museum, 288-300 A St., Boston. Gallery hours are noon to 6 p.m., Wed.-Sat. Call (617) 439-8617.



PIECE BY PIECE: School children created the Crumbs Company model store that is on display at the recently opened Revolving Museum in South Boston. The student artists are, from left, Danny Perry, Sasha Sheets, Kenny Mays, Gabriel Sosa and Becky Gonzalez.



CATCH OF DAY: Jerry Beck found a permanent home for the art projects that come out of the community with the opening of his Revolving Museum in South Boston. (Staff photo by Ted Fitzgerald)