

LOFT LIVING

New Santa Monica apartments were inspired by artist work spaces

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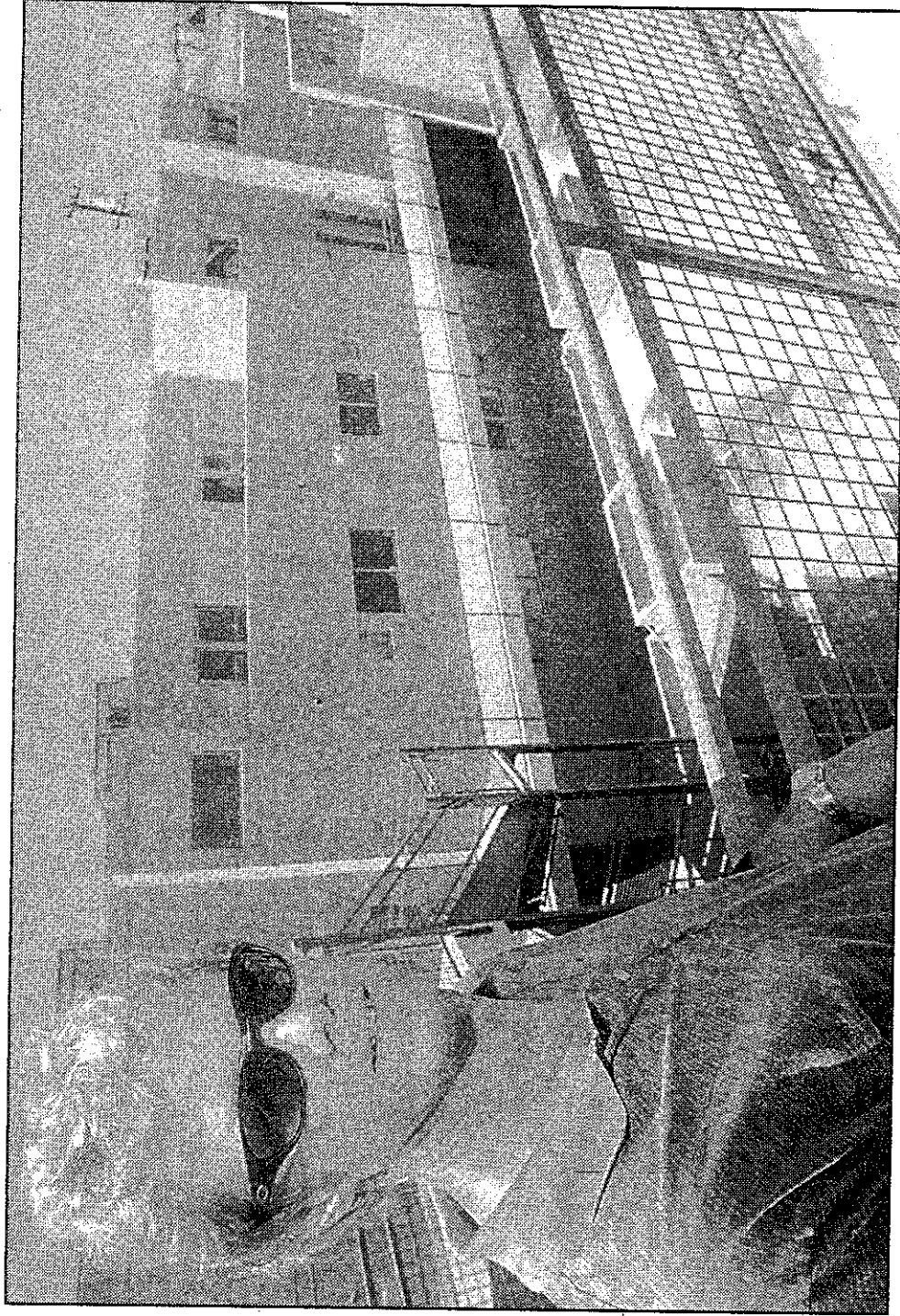
SANTA MONICA — The beams on the ceilings of the new Santa Monica Art Colony Apartments are exposed. The wood doors are unstained. The planters are fashioned out of concrete blocks.

The developer, Carl Lambert, used to manage an industrial park on Pico, where visual artists rented studio space. He said he wanted to duplicate the park's rough, edgy feel for his new apartment building, and attract some of the same clientele.

But with a monthly rent ranging from \$1,050 to \$2,550 per month, David Hibbert, the project's architect, wonders if the units might be a little pricey for the candle-in-a-Chianti-bottle crowd.

"We appreciate that they very well may be leased to different kinds of artists, like people doing special effects or post-production work on computers," Hibbert said. "But we're hoping some of them get leased to actual painters or sculptors, because that's who we designed these for."

Regardless of future residents' artistic merits, the building itself has plenty. Its exterior is a mix of nearly colorless concrete walls and protruding metal cubes (sheet metal being a sort of Hibbert signature) that alternately blend into and flash out from their surroundings, depending on the light. A bell tower-like elevator module, also



Owner Carl Lambert in the soon-to-be-open, artist-loft style Santa Monica Art Colony apartments.

RYAN MILLER/OUR TIMES

adorned with metal sheeting, lends the complex a religious air, as if it were a sort of temple to the Westside's multi-family-unit lifestyle.

Because of the way the building was financed, the worshippers it attracts will not be drawn solely from the yuppie castes. The site had been home to a moving and storage company, but that building was damaged in the 1994 Northridge earthquake. This

made Lambert's apartments eligible for a \$1.8 million subsidized loan from the city of Santa Monica, part of a \$34 million post-earthquake rebuilding program funded by the federal government, according to city housing official Jesus Morales.

Because the federal dollars came with certain strings attached, six of the 22 units will be reserved for families making less than 60% of the

county's median income. Their rents will be fixed at \$731 per month.

Hibbert and Lambert said that the simple, unfinished look of the place created problems when it came to dealing with city inspectors, who required numerous revisions to the building. And though the building may not fill up with the painters and sculptors it was designed for, Lambert seems satisfied

he'll find "a good mix" of tenants to enjoy the extra-large walls, the light sources from varying directions, and other features meant to accommodate the traditional artist (he'll be courting future tenants at an open house from noon to 4 p.m. today at 1011 Pico Blvd.).

"I've already had a lot of people send applications in," Lambert said. "I think it's a