

# Numark shutter its doors

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Sadly, another Washington gallery has bit the dust.

On Dec. 16, the Numark Gallery — the city's premiere gallery, with imaginative, often large-scale shows in the city's Penn Quarter heart — closed its doors.

Fortunately, visitors can see its final exhibition, "The Last Show," through Feb. 3.

With its 750,000 square feet of street-level space at 625-27 E St. NW, its size and variety will be unequalled.

"I purposely pushed visibility for the public with this street-level, glassed location," says gallery owner Cheryl Numark. Plans for the space have not been announced.

Ms. Numark, 50, cited health and family concerns for closing the 11-year-old gallery, although she may continue as a private art consultant.

To succeed, a gallery must have a point of view. Ms. Numark says she set out to create a gallery with "artists who wanted to push their boundaries," and she did with the 20 artists she represented.

The last serious Washington galleries to close — Gallery K in 2003 and Anton in 2002 — had directors who also placed irreplaceable stamps on Washington.

Gallery K owners Komei Wachi and H. Marc Moyens — their deaths in 2003 closed the gallery — loved artists who produced surrealist, funky, fantastical work. This output was so individualistic that few of the gallery's 50 artists have found new venues. Well-known former Gallery K funky artist Joe Shannon now shows on his Web site ([www.joeshannonart.com](http://www.joeshannonart.com)).

At first, Anton Gallery — run by director Gail Enns — flourished on R Street in the 1980s and 1990s with Pacific Rim and Asian artists Tom Nakashima, Mary Annell Frank and Korean-trained potter Rob Barnard.

“After 9/11, things turned around, however. The spirit seemed to drain from Washington, and we moved west, establishing galleries in Monterey and Pacific Grove. It’s exciting, but we miss the nation’s capital,” Ms. Enns says.

This passion for certain goals is seen in Ms. Numark’s “The Last Show.” A former lawyer who first opened a gallery at 406 Seventh St. NW, Ms. Numark says she always has focused on variety, those who use light and materials in special ways, and artists with conceptual visions, such as Jim Sanborn and Yuriko Yamaguchi.

Tony Feher and Dan Steinhilber use readily available materials with a touch of humor. Mr. Steinhilber’s “Untitled” mounts two fans blowing into each other. Mr. Feher’s “Green” dangles 13 beverage bottles with food coloring, water and white screw caps. “They’re almost anthropomorphic,” Ms. Numark says with a laugh.

She doesn’t stay with humor long, however. She cites Mr. Sanborn as a major Washington artist “who’s always changing” and “transforms physical materials into invisible forces in nature.”

The gallery director describes how Mr. Sanborn, in “Topographic Projections,” shot light onto mountains and rock formations in Arizona, Utah and Oregon to create geometric patterns out of nature and light. Depending on where he photographed, the patterns are circles, ellipses, grids and triangles.

They reflect, she says, “man’s desire to geometrize nature through extraordinary uses of light.” A 1997 projection from County Cork, Ireland (Ilfachrome print), is on display.

Mr. Sanborn quickly found Irvine Contemporary at 14th and P streets Northwest — the old Fusebox Gallery — as his new dealer. “It has good space,” he says, “though not as big as Numark.”

On the other hand, Ms. Numark was attracted to Miss Yamaguchi's Asian roots, expression of universal philosophies, creation of large, site-specific work and unusual use of materials,

The Japanese-born artist first showed her "Metamorphosis" series at Numark in 1999, ones she visualizes as life cycles and progressions of growth and decay. For the past 13 years, she has obsessively produced rows of visionary, charged objects, stylized human organs and plant seeds in vertical and horizontal rows.

In 2003, she showed her site-specific, ceiling-tall transparent "webs," which also stand for flux and change. Some have funnel shapes; others are circular.

Although represented by galleries in Japan, New York and Los Angeles, she still is looking for a Washington gallery. "The Washington gallery closings are depressing," she says.

Prominent local artist Robin Rose is more vitriolic.

"It's a shame that when Cheryl Numark was willing to make that much of a commitment to a community that has so much money — for example, Washington is building a \$611-million-plus baseball stadium — and so much educational and cultural wealth, she wouldn't be appreciated," he says.

"Washington shouldn't be lagging along after Europe's Documenta and Venice Biennale; we should be leading the cultural dialogue."

That will be a long time coming.