



■ Artists Helene Schairer (pictured) and James Paris have set up non-profit art studios and exhibition space, Allegretta Art Studios, in Fremantle. Picture by MARTIN KENNEALEY.

Kudos to duo

THE needs of working artists have been met with the timely development of non-profit art studios and exhibition space in Pakenham Street, Fremantle.

Allegretta Art Studios has been established "by artists for artists" and after 12 months' preparation, will be launched with a public exhibition starting on February 26 until March 18.

Entitled Kudos, the exhibition will feature the work of up to 45 in-house artisans including writers, architects, photographers, sculptors, painters, printmakers, ceramic artists, graphic artists and craft people from all over the metropolitan area.

The brainchild of James Paris, of Fremantle, and Helene Schairer, of

By MICHELE NUGENT

Nedlands, the project began in October 1992 and has snowballed into something more practical than ambitious.

Representing an investment of about \$50,000, the development is a very logical one — a place for artists to work and exhibit at an affordable price.

It incorporates 45 studios and an exhibition space where the work of resident artists will be on display for the public to see and buy from 11am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 5pm on weekends.

It is self-supporting and, although it has received some private donations, does not rely on government grants.

It is housed in an old woolstore built

early this century and when James and Helene discovered it there were already about six artists eking out a living from makeshift workshops in the building.

The pair met because their "studios" were next to each other and conversation soon turned to the idea of providing affordable studio space for artists.

"Artists who work at home or have isolated studios rarely have contact with the general public or other art buyers and exhibitors," James said.

"Usually, the only way to get exposure is to stage an exhibition at an art gallery and once the artist has paid for the invitations, the opening, framing and given away a 30 or 40 per cent commission, they aren't left with much.

"This studio is affordable. The

weekly rent, which will only go up once a year, ranges from \$25 to \$80. This enables artists, who have unreliable incomes anyway, to plan ahead.

Helene, a sculptor and painter, said the studio was unpretentious and welcoming, not glossy and slick like other galleries where the general public sometimes felt uncomfortable or self-conscious.

"There is a mixture of students and established artists which is beneficial because we all stimulate each other's creativity," she said.

"We plan to hold in-house seminars and art classes so we can learn from each other's talents. Basically, we are filling a gap in the market."

James, a painter, said 15 nationalities were represented by the artists who had already formed a close community, keen to share ideas.