

Lon Michels' 'Freedom' opens at Custom House Museum

Visitors to Lon Michels' studio, in his Florida Street house cannot help but be overwhelmed by a sense of Freedom: Michels' painting entitled "Freedom," that is.

The 9-by 12-foot acrylic creation has taken over the entire east wall, with its explosive color and detail. It is, he explains, his masterwork: A painting that has taken him more than a year to complete and will serve as the focus of a new exhibition that opens with a wine and cheese reception from 5:30-7 this afternoon, at the Custom House Museum, 281 Front St., for members of the Key West Art & Historical Society and their friends.

The exhibition is part of the Museum's Artists-In Season series, and marks the first public showing of the painting.

Part of the Custom House exhibition comprises more than two dozen paintings of scenes of New Orleans, which he did in 2002.

Last summer a retinal disease caused the 41 year old Michels to go almost totally blind, and he just recently has regained enough eyesight to be able to read.

But even when he was so blind he could recognize only very light and very dark colors, he was able to create a huge, two-part painting almost totally by feel.

That painting, which consists



Artist Lon Michels with some of his New Orleans series of paintings.

of two 5- by 12-foot panels, will hang in the show along with earlier works, some of which have been sold and are on loan for the exhibit.

For more information, call 295-6616.