

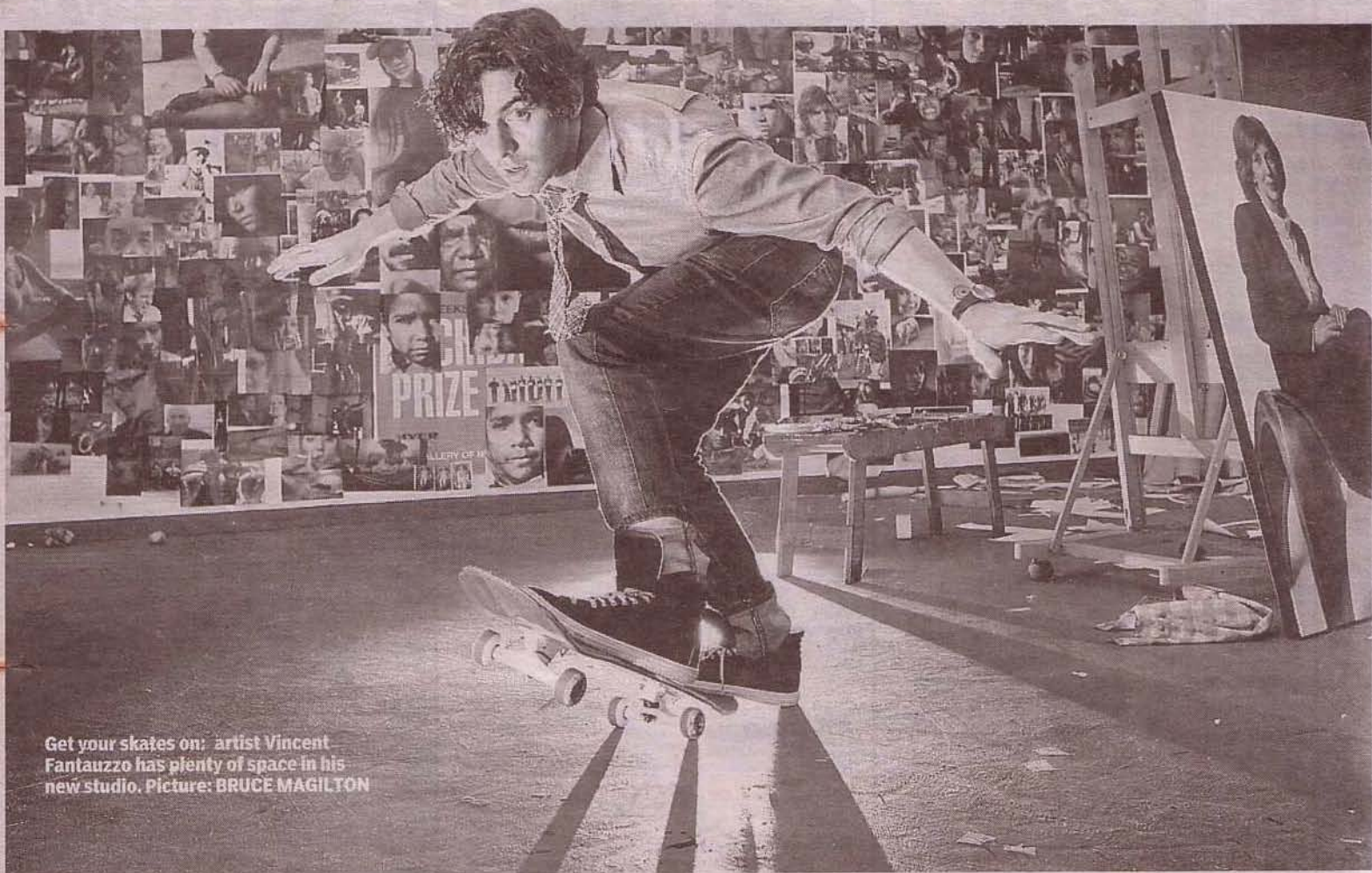
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The best thing I've read lately

"*The Three Emperors* by Miranda Carter. I love history and I thoroughly enjoy it. It's most amusing. You find out all sorts of things about the British royal family. It's a little dirt, just things you didn't know and you think, 'You buggers, fancy doing

Author Colleen McCullough

the arts & entertainment you want



Get your skates on: artist Vincent Fantauzzo has plenty of space in his new studio. Picture: BRUCE MAGILTON

Board and lodgings

Artists are finding new digs in cheaper, refurbished studios near the city, writes **Harbant Gill**

ARTISTS forced out of expensive inner-city studios are moving into empty public buildings, with the help of people in the right places.

Archibald People's Choice Award winner Vincent Fantauzzo is one. Despite his win with the portrait of young *Australia* actor Brandon Walters, Fantauzzo works out of a low-rent Southbank studio subsidised by the City of Melbourne.

The Melbourne artist, who was also last year's People's Choice winner with his Heath Ledger portrait, pays \$180 a

week for one of the largest of 22 spaces at the Boyd School Studios in City Rd, next to the Kingsway overpass.

"Publicity is great but it doesn't pay the rent," says Fantauzzo, who has worked long hours six days a week since graduating four years ago from RMIT.

"Art is expensive. Everything goes back into it. And if you want to travel overseas to line up exhibitions, it comes out of your own pocket. The studio I have is a bargain. A lot of artists can't afford even that."

The public will be able to visit these

studios during their first open day tomorrow.

The State Government in 2007 sold the former J.H. Boyd High School to the City of Melbourne, which opened it as studios early this year on a monthly lease at about a third of commercial rates.

The rents range from \$35 for smaller studios to \$180 a week for larger ones.

Many artists there had been forced out of city spaces by soaring rents or redevelopment.

"In the city, the studios are much smaller and cost a bomb. Even in Brunswick you couldn't find a place this size and with this much light," says Fantauzzo of his classroom-size space, which has allowed him to work on commissions, prepare his Archibald

portrait for next year and paint works for charity.

He has managed to live off the sales of his work while preparing for overseas shows and a six-month project in New York next year to explore the history of hip hop through portraiture.

One of his studio neighbours, fashion illustrator Louise Baker, was "absolutely desperate" when she found the studio about four months ago.

"I have been trying to find an affordable and appropriate place for years. If you can't do your artwork you just go bonkers," she says.

see > Boyd School Studios Open Day, 207-229 City Rd, Southbank, Dec 5, noon-5pm.