

JASON MIDDLEBROK
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Los Angeles News

Artist Converts Building Wreckage Into Furniture

(CBS) RIVERSIDE Art has replaced the wrecking ball in the demolition of a downtown building. In a project dubbed "Live Building," New York-based artist and sculptor Jason Middlebrook is converting pieces of the Wurms Janitorial Building on Main Street's downtown plaza into concrete furniture, according to a UC Riverside official.

"He is cutting into the building, taking pieces out, and creating new pieces, such as furniture and other useful objects," Kris Lovekin of UC Riverside said. "This is what we call 'performance art.'"

The 100-year-old Wurms building is being torn down to make room for the future Barbara and Art Culver Center of the Arts, which will adjoin UCR's California Museum of Photography and the Sweeney Art Gallery, on the south side of the downtown mall, across from City Hall, Lovekin said.

Collectively, the buildings will form an area that has been designated "UCR Artsblock."

Middlebrook started work Tuesday and plans to spend another 10 days dismantling the building and recycling pieces of it into artwork, according to Lovekin.

"There are parts of it that are historical that we want to preserve," Lovekin said. "Otherwise, some of Jason's creations will be auctioned off or given away. We might even include something he comes up with in our Sweeney Art Gallery."

The artist was hired by the university and will receive an \$8,000 "honorarium" for his effort, Lovekin said.

Shane Shukis, UCR's education and communication director, described the "Live Building" project as an "artistic intervention."

"It's based on the idea that physical places have a memory and importance to the community that can be preserved," Shukis said.

Middlebrook will be discussing his project in detail Thursday night at 7 in the campus arts building, room 335, at the corner of Canyon Crest Street and University Avenue, Lovekin said.

His deconstruction of the Wurms building will end with a creative flourish on Dec. 16, when he plows down the facade with a bulldozer, she said.

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