JASON MIDDLEBROOK
LIVE WITH LESS

February 3 – April 5, 2009
Essay by Dan Cameron
Interview by Mary-Kay Lombino

University Art Museum
University at Albany
State University of New York
Inspired by the Countless Trips from My House to My Studio, 2008
Graphite on paper
50 x 58 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Meltzer Gallery, New York
Cardboard Stack (detail), 2009
Cardboard boxes
35 x 20 x 20 feet
Courtesy of the artist
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Courtesy of the artist
I have followed Jason Middlebrook’s work for many years, and it has been a privilege as well as great fun to work with him on Live with Less. His monumental Cardboard Stack draws our attention to the levels of consumption on campus that so often go unnoticed by those who work, study, and visit here. Its layers reveal familiar vestiges of campus life, while begging the questions: is it all necessary? Is it possible to create a dynamic learning environment while learning to live with less? Many on campus are working individually, and as administrative units, to assure the answer is a resounding “yes."

As always, many people have helped to realize this exhibition and catalogue. I am grateful to UAlbany Interim President George M. Philip and Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Susan D. Phillips, whose ongoing support has been critical to this and every project we undertake. Associate Vice President William Hedberg is an advocate and a continuing source of wisdom. From our earliest conversations, Sara Meltzer has been gracious and enthusiastic; her support has made this publication possible.
possible. Thanks also go to Rachel Gugelberger and the entire staff of the Sara Meltzer Gallery for their assistance. The generosity of lenders Robert and Meryl Meltzer allowed us to include the signature drawing Live with Less.

Thanks go to the University Art Museum staff who worked tirelessly to realize the exhibition. I am particularly indebted to Jeffrey Wright-Sedam, whose problem-solving abilities on a shoestring budget were tested once again; to Corinna Ripes Schaming and Naomi Lewis, who worked closely with Jason to give the exhibition form and to smooth its progress; and to Zheng Hu, who designed this wonderful catalogue. But the rest of the staff—Dacie Abbatiello, Joanne Lue, Wren Panzella, Ryan Parr, and Patricia VanAlstyne—also assisted in their respective and critical areas of expertise. A number of the museum’s work-study students played a particularly important role in this installation; we are fortunate that Zohar Lazar and Letha Wilson were able to assist Jason with fabrication and installation.

The museum is grateful to the UAlbany Offices of Environmental Sustainability and Facilities Management for their assistance in collecting cardboard for this project and for their ongoing commitment to promoting environmental accountability on campus. The project would not have been possible without the support of many members of the UAlbany community, including Mary Ellen Mallia, director of the Office of Environmental Sustainability; Professor Ed Mayer, Department of Art; and Tim Reilly, manager of Grounds Operations. Special thanks go to our student volunteers Tegan Barron-Shashok, Dan Foerste, Kris Hauser, Doug Holst, Janae McHugh, Alan Noble, and Ariel Willmott who worked over winter break sorting, cutting, and stacking cardboard.

This is the first exhibition and publication to be supported by the museum’s two-year grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. It is a great pleasure to express our gratitude to Program Director Pamela Clapp and to the foundation’s board for their confidence and support.

With boundless energy, enthusiasm, and good humor, Jason Middlebrook moved this project from good idea to compelling reality. He has been generous in sharing his ideas and his efforts with all who have been involved in the project. And we are all the richer for it.
Jason Middlebrook’s work explores the relationship between nature and human consumption. He is a longtime practitioner of using recyclable materials such as old wood, cardboard boxes, and plastic bottles to draw attention to the unbridled wastefulness of contemporary living. Live with Less is an expression of Middlebrook’s artistic and environmental goal: to see beyond the discarded nature of these materials and to re-imagine them in new, resilient forms.

Considered one of today’s most socially responsible artists, Middlebrook draws inspiration from a range of disparate sources, including ecology, art history, geography, and politics. In Live with Less, he literally brings the wastefulness of contemporary living to new heights with Cardboard Stack (2009), a thirty-five-foot tower in the center of the museum. Made from several tons of recycled cardboard collected on campus over a two-month period, the tower’s visual stratifications are analogous to the layers of a landfill. Often populated by watchful birds and sporadic weeds, these stratifications make their appearance in many of Middlebrook’s sculptures and two-dimensional works, including his most recent paintings done on collapsed cardboard boxes.

Middlebrook’s frequent references to the urban environment are tinged with romantic yearning. His wall drawings and large tapestry-like paintings on cardboard evoke the sensation of viewing an illuminated city from an airplane window. This seemingly incongruous stance from an artist with strong ties to the natural world is actually in keeping with his focus on the complexities of contemporary living. Ever mindful of the tenuous balance between progress and a future filled with diminishing returns, Middlebrook depicts dazzling networks of color and light, knowing full well that this beautiful view comes with a carbon footprint.

Middlebrook’s continued interest in defining his role as an artist in relation to the larger world takes its most pointed turn in the hand-painted aphorisms found in the museum’s lobby. Culled from sketchbook notations, the words, while funny and provocative, take on a cautionary urgency when read carefully. Here again, Middlebrook stresses the need to be mindful of what we discard, this time in the form of thoughts and ideas.

In all his efforts, Middlebrook speaks to our need to live with less, while at the same time he shows us that all is not lost. As he states, there are plenty of regenerative possibilities in “creating something from nothing.”
Five Years—Five Drawing Books, 2009
90 signs
Cardboard, house paint, acrylic paint, and ink
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
Jason Middlebrook is a doer, maker, builder, conjurer, moralist, illusionist, environmentalist, humanist, pragmatist, provocateur, and a fervent believer in the power of art to change people’s thinking, and by extension their lives. In listing all these possible descriptions of what Middlebrook does, there is of course a potential danger that he will appear to the reader/viewer as a jack-of-all-trades, but master of only a few. A more accurate summation is that Middlebrook is an emphatically post-modern artist, in that he doesn’t attempt to dazzle the viewer with the technical skills that are evidently at the core of his practice, nor is he interested in providing us with an easy escape route from the ordinary to the sublime. Rather, the more he becomes enmeshed in the struggles of various social movements to attain a critical mass, the more emphatic his art becomes. A champion of causes that fall far outside the realm of aesthetics, Middlebrook is pursued by the nagging fear that art is a trivial thing, and his efforts to make sure this is not the case are nothing short of marvelous.

The processes of decay and entropy, and the science behind them, can be found at the core of Middlebrook’s artistic mission. The first project that I had the pleasure to collaborate with him on as curator, Dig (2001–02), involved an ingenious transformation of a newly constructed atrium space created from the hole dug through the ground floor and into the basement of the New Museum’s Soho headquarters. The opening had been a construction site such a short time prior to his installation that Middlebrook’s intervention, which took the appearance of a loamy stratum of nature shoving its way into view, seemed oddly logical. Although the atrium was clearly not outdoors, nor was there any other reason to imagine that roots, rocks, and fossils were waiting on the other side of the steel and concrete floor to push their way through, most viewers instantly suspended their disbelief the moment they saw Dig, in large part because of the way it was sandwiched between two very different levels. The title, which at first suggested an archaeological site, gradually flipped its meaning to indicate a sliver of nature that the architects and contractors had somehow overlooked. It might have started out as a narrow slice of vegetal life, but one day, when the man-made canyons of Soho have disappeared, it might emerge triumphant.

A much more recent collaboration with Middlebrook took place in New Orleans in early 2008, about two and a half years after the devastating floods that wrecked the city when the storm surge created by Hurricane Katrina overwhelmed the fragile levee system that kept New Orleans dry. Although most of the city’s neighborhoods had been repaired, rebuilt, and re-inhabited by the
time of his arrival, it was still possible to find piles of discarded wood from old houses at various points. In short order, Middlebrook located several impressive structural beams, transported them into the wood shop of the Contemporary Arts Center, and deftly transformed them into sturdy public benches. Bearing weathered traces of old paint, the benches retained their historical connection to the city’s storied architectural history and at the same time provided a compelling paradigm for salvaging the detritus of large-scale devastation and transforming it into objects that directly served the public good.

Middlebrook’s Albany exhibition, while offering an overview of many aspects of his fast-growing oeuvre, is also one of the first efforts to demonstrate how his work consistently addresses the destruction of the planet’s resources by our attempts to usurp those resources for our own short-term gain. In particular, fossil fuels, and their ongoing relation to the living samples of wood from which they were derived over the course of countless eons, are only one of the dialectical stress-points that he emphasizes as a way of revealing hidden relations between intention and willful disregard. Equally urgent are the ties he articulates between the artist’s desire to make an impact on his or her social environment and the far less benign implications of the materials used for that purpose. In detailing these relationships, however, it is important to emphasize that Middlebrook’s purpose in bringing together such seemingly disconnected points of reference is not to make us feel badly about our destructive impact on the world, but, on the contrary, to make us feel good about the fact that we are intelligent and sensitive enough to be aware of the damage, especially when an artist of his immense abilities is the one to point it out to us.

Dan Cameron is founding director and chief curator of Prospect.1 New Orleans, a new international biennial that opened November 2008. He also serves as director of visual arts for the Contemporary Arts Center in New Orleans. Previously senior curator at the New Museum in New York from 1995 to 2007, Cameron is also a member of the graduate faculty of School of Visual Arts (SVA) in New York.
For over a decade, Jason Middlebrook has been interested in the intersections between ecology and culture, entropy and regeneration, civilization and the wilderness. Recently he has begun to address these themes by re-using discarded materials before they go into landfills, transforming everything from plastic bottles to demolition debris to entire rooms of cardboard into unexpectedly striking objects that embody the ideas behind recycling, while at the same time challenging our concepts of artistic beauty. His artwork is not only evidence of the enormous accumulation of garbage we produce, but a suggestion that much of our trash can be transformed into something new, perhaps even something functional and beautiful.

Mary-Kay: Your last show in Miami, One Man’s Trash Is Another Man’s Treasure, included imitation Andy Warhol Brillo boxes in a state of abandon and deterioration, with plants growing out of them. You are clearly addressing Man’s age-old, futile struggle against the powerful force of nature, but is there also a knowing critique of the art world and all its hubris?

Jason: Actually, the Brillo box planter idea came from a personal story. When I first arrived in New York in 1994 for the Whitney Program, I worked for an art dealer doing installation work. We were preparing for a Warhol and Judd show and there were Brillo boxes in the gallery. That week there was a leak in the bathroom, and when the plumber came to fix it he walked in and threw his jacket on one of the Brillo boxes. That was a moment that I will never forget, when I saw the jacket on the box but I was afraid to say anything. I had been in New York for all of two weeks at that point. When the dealer saw it, he flipped. The plumber had no idea what the problem was. It was one of those instances when you ask, at what point does high art meet garbage? So years later, I decided to literally and figuratively turn the Brillo box on its head and fill it with dirt and make it into a planter. I guess that could be considered a critique of the art world, but also homage to Warhol for having done it first.

Also, for me, it’s about challenging the hierarchy of the art world and the arbitrary system that sets the price of art. The art world takes these objects and puts them on a pedestal and creates a market for them. I like to take something the art world perceives as valuable and show it in ruins.

Mary-Kay: In 2006 you were commissioned by University of California, Riverside to create Live Building, a project in which you made art with all usable materials from the demolition of the Wurms Building. And now here, used cardboard is the material for
the new work. When did you first start re-using discarded materials in your work? What attracts you to those materials?

**Jason:** My attraction to using discarded materials is to address the sheer volume of refuse our culture creates. In a few recent projects, including the one in Riverside and this exhibition, I set rules or limits for myself. In Live Building, I had to make something out of all the material we could salvage from the building, and here I had to use all the cardboard intended for recycling by the campus. I have found that when you put limits on a project, it becomes really interesting. The stricter the rules, the more possibilities you find in order to work within those parameters.

I’m also interested in the inherent beauty and nostalgia of other people’s trash. I want to be able to use it in a way that reflects today’s zeitgeist—the desires of today’s society. How can something be useful the second time around? How can something become beautiful the second time around? How can wood and cardboard become perfect materials for this because they’re organic and have plenty of life left in them. And of course, using recycled materials is a general design trend, but my work is different from design and architecture in a few ways. One is the limits I put on myself, and the other is the community component—working with kids and college students to bring awareness and appreciation to the materials.

Recently at The Oxbow School I gave students an assignment to draw a piece of wood, then write a fictional story about it, and then work together to make something functional with the material. The project helped them recognize that the wood had a history, but it also gave it a new life, one with a creative solution. Sometimes I get bored by the process and the strategies of making something new, like a painting or a sculpture. Finding a pile of wood and asking, what can I do with this?—that is more exciting to me. It’s exciting because most people don’t see its intrinsic value.

**Mary-Kay:** Is your objective more about finding beauty in garbage, or are you trying to decrease the amount of garbage we produce and raise a sense of social awareness and responsibility?

**Jason:** Decreasing the amount of garbage in the world would be nice, but it’s a futile undertaking, so my work becomes more social commentary. Like archaeology, digging through used objects can reveal things about our culture, about our priorities. It presents the question, why do we use all this cardboard? Is it necessary? Hopefully a few students will stop in their tracks, stop text messaging their friends for a minute, and think about the refuse that comes out of this university and what can be done with it—other than just making more trash later after it gets recycled.

**Mary-Kay:** To me, your planks are part painting, part sculpture, and part tree. They blatantly refer back to the inherent nature of the material, from the grain of the wood to the shape of the tree they came from. Can you comment on what they mean to you?

**Jason:** The planks are a lot of things. They started as paintings on these found slabs of wood that were a reference to folk art and vernacular art, like sign paintings or landscapes you see at yard sales that are painted on saw blades—things like that. I wanted to try that on a larger scale—one that relates also to the Native totems I’ve seen in the Pacific Northwest. But mostly they’re a reference to trees with their narrow verticality. I think of them as a way to reveal a core sample of a tree by bringing out the wood grain. The more I painted, the more I began looking at the relationship between hard-edge painting and the natural lines in the material, between representation and abstraction. That’s why one resembles Op art and one looks like graffiti, while others represent the urban grid.

I needed a way to resolve their display, and leaning them against the wall seemed to make sense. I have leaned art this way before, and it falls between painting and sculpture in a way similar to John McCracken’s high-gloss planks or some of Robert Gober’s work that exists somewhere between the floor and the wall.

**Mary-Kay:** The cardboard you used to make the new works in this show all came from the recycling bins on the SUNY Albany campus, which has an enrollment of 18,000 students and employs over a thousand people. When you began this project, you had no idea how much cardboard you would be given or what condition it would be in. What were your expectations going into it, and were you surprised by the outcome?

**Jason:** The most surprising thing was the sheer volume of food and books and other products that was delivered to campus. I originally asked if I could have one year’s worth of cardboard to use as my material for the art. After a few days, I was told that one year of cardboard would be so immense that it would be a logistical nightmare. Even a few months’ worth has been very difficult to manage. The cardboard comes primarily from food
boxes—cereal, pop tarts, milk, eggs, bread, pizza, that kind of thing. At the end of each day there’s about a five-foot-high palette of crushed cardboard just from the food deliveries.

The big challenge then became, what do I do with all this cardboard? My interest in cardboard goes back to when I first saw Frank Gehry’s corrugated cardboard chairs and Rauschenberg’s combines. They blew me away. Since then, I have wanted to use cardboard. It’s strong but it will decay and fall apart, which I like. I like the fact that its re-usable shelf life is limited. But it can also be a valuable resource, going beyond its original function. If you’re homeless, it can serve as a temporary shelter or a way to communicate. For me, there’s something poetic about that. Even though it doesn’t have much structural integrity, I love the color of it—this unapologetic brown. The used cardboard I was given is stamped on the outside with logos and symbols that trace its use and implicate us as the users. I try to integrate that into my work as much as possible without being too corny.

Mary-Kay: In this exhibition, I also see inherent conflict in the fact that we use cardboard in such excess, while others need it as a source of survival.

Jason: I like the idea of cardboard becoming makeshift cabins, shantytowns, or someone’s home. You don’t have to go to architecture school or even read Dwell magazine to make your own house. I choose not to buy into the convention, or the pretention, of modernist design in order to create something that is both functional and beautiful. I love the look of Craftsman-style houses and mid-century modern furniture design, but I’m always trying to push against those traditions. I’m looking for the tension between modern design and a more organic way of building things. And cardboard works well for that because it’s a subset of a tree; it’s a form of paper.

Mary-Kay: Getting Off the Grid Is Hard To Do depicts a rustic cabin that is seemingly symbolic of your life in upstate New York. I sense tension between life in the city and life in the country in your paintings, where you often portray an idealized version of the urban and the rural. Does that reflect your own ambivalence or enjoyment of each lifestyle?

Jason: I have a huge appreciation for both lifestyles. I wish I could live in both at once. There’s the fantasy of completely isolating yourself and living in the middle of nowhere. And on the other side, there’s this romantic idea of never giving up that little rent-controlled apartment in Manhattan, in the center of everything. I have a little bit of the grass-is-always-greener syndrome. Which is why my images of the city are usually depicted from above—many of them look like Los Angeles or New York as seen from a plane at night. This is when the city looks the most seductive to me.

Mary-Kay: Do your northern California roots influence your work?

Jason: I always have a question in my mind about whether I’m going to continue living on the East Coast or go back to California where I grew up. Northern California to me represents an abundance of land and an alternative lifestyle. I grew up in the mountains, I grew up near the ocean, I grew up with hippies and dome houses. After the technology boom in northern California, that earnest hippie quality diminished because there was suddenly so much money spreading out from San Francisco. When I started coming up to Columbia County, New York from Brooklyn, it was the closest thing I had ever seen to the California I remember. It’s a rustic area with a community that exists outside a big city, and in some ways depends on the city, but offers a completely different lifestyle that is as close to off-the-grid as it gets. Upstate New York offered me an opportunity to buy a piece of land and live a sort of manifest destiny, the American dream of building a homestead. That idea has a lot of nostalgia for me because it reminds me of what my parents did in Los Gatos, California.

Since I moved up here, I’ve become more focused than I was when I lived in Brooklyn. The themes of my work have not changed much, only intensified, since I’m living so close to the land now. The closer I get to isolation, the more clear it is to me what my place is in relationship to nature, and that has become a central issue in my work and in the way I think.

Mary-Kay Lombino is The Emily Hargroves Fisher ’57 and Richard B. Fisher Curator at The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, where she oversees the photography and contemporary art collections, exhibitions, and publications. She has previously served as curator of exhibitions at the University Art Museum, California State University, Long Beach and assistant curator at UCLA Hammer Museum.
The Difference Between Soil & Dirt, 2000
Graphite on paper
20 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Wall Drawing (detail), 2009
Acrylic paint
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist
Getting Off the Grid Is Hard To Do, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper
39 ¾ x 101½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzter Gallery, New York
APL #1 Discovering Fossils, 2003
Colored pencil, graphite, ink, pen, Xerox transfer, and acrylic on paper
44 x 80 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York
Untitled Painted Planks (installation view), 2008
Acrylic paint on wood
Cast Concrete Plastic Bottles (detail), 2008
Cast concrete
Dimensions variable
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York
Maggots on a Steak, 2008
Acrylic, ink, and pencil on paper
41 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York
Stacked Night Sky 1, 2, 3, 4, 2009
All works cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
20 x 5 feet, 6 x 8 feet, 18 x 3½ feet, 22 x 4½ feet
Courtesy of the artist
LEFT:
Stacked Night Sky 1, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
20 x 5 feet
Courtesy of the artist

RIGHT:
Stacked Night Sky 3 (detail), 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, colored pencil, and cable ties
18 x 3½ feet
Courtesy of the artist
Inspired by the Countless Trips from My House to My Studio, 2008
Graphite on paper, 50 x 58 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Magpie on a Streak, 2008
Acrylic, ink and pencil on paper, 41 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Somewhere’s Been Here Before, 2008
Graphite on paper, 30 x 41 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 1, 2008
Acrylic paint on cottonwood, 123½ x 17¾ x 1⅛ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 2, 2008
Acrylic paint on cherry wood, 85½ x 18½ x 1⅛ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 3, 2008
Acrylic paint on walnut wood, 109 x 16½ x 1½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Untitled Painted Plank 4, 2008
Acrylic paint on oak wood, 111 x 17⅝ x 1½ inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

Live with Less, 2008
Graphite on paper, 49½ x 38 inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Melzer

AFL #2 Discovering Fossils, 2003
Colored pencil, graphite, ink, pen, Xerox transfer, and acrylic on paper, 44 x 80 inches
Courtesy of the artist and Sara Melzer Gallery, New York

The Difference Between Soil & Dirt, 2001
Graphite on paper, 48½ x 63 inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Melzer

Vesuvius, 2003
Acrylic on paper, 36 x 57½ inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Melzer

The Difference Between Soil & Dirt, 2000
Graphite on paper, 20 x 30 inches
Collection of Robert and Meryl Melzer

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Page dimensions: 1152.0 x 792.0

51
1969 Born in Jackson, MI
Lives and works in West Taghkanic, NY

EDUCATION
1990 University of California at Santa Cruz, B.A. in Fine Arts
1994-95 Whitney Independent Study Program, New York, NY
1994 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA, Master of Fine Arts
1999 University of California at Santa Cruz, B.A. in Fine Art

SOLO EXHIBITIONS / PROJECTS
2000 Jason Middlebrook: Live with Less, University Art Museum, University at Albany, Albany, NY
2003 Jason Middlebrook, Sara Melzer Gallery, New York, NY
2007 One Man’s Trash is Another Man’s Treasure, Kevin McGregor, Westport, CT
A Serious Paradox, Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, CA

WHAT IS YOUR HOBBY? The Firework Project, East Hampton, NY
Craft in Contemporary Art, curated by Evelyn C. Hankins, Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, East Burlington, VT
Mert Bridge 2, Rockland County Art Center, Rockland, NY
Five, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE
Green Dreams, curated by Anne Karntin and Christine Heldman, Kunstenveren Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany
Winter Invitational, curated by Wenny Huang, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
Traveling Seeds, commissioned by Park, M. Sinai Hospital, New York, NY
Bowling Square, curated by Adam Teller, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, New York, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS
Curated by Joana Acker and Emily Gordy, A+D Gallery, Chicago, IL
2008 The Rain, the Flood, and Other Things, curated by Renier Ricardo, Nicole Fiacco Gallery, Hudson, NY
Field Work, Smart Project Space, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Some Kind of Night, curated by Dan Cameron, Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans, LA
Inside/Outside: Tree Lines, curated by Amy Lipton, Albright Art Center, Jenkintown, PA
At the Trees, curated by Kimberly Marmers, Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, Summit, NJ
Perfect Point, Mona Lisa Renee Gallery, New York, NY

2005 Apocalypse Soon, curated by Kristin Valasadese, ODE, Los Angeles, CA
The Obligation to Evolve: Art and Ecology Since Silent Spring, curated by Nicola Beut, New York Academy of Science, New York, NY
Five Projects, Wave Hill, Bronx, NY
Mert Bridge, organized by Jason Middlebrook, Hudson, NY
Exhibition of Visual Art 2005, curated by Dan Cameron, Limerick, Ireland

Print Publishers Spotlight, Barbara Wackwitz Gallery, Boston, MA
Crude Oil Paintings, curated by Elena Sorokina, White Columns, New York, NY (catalogue)
Cleanliness, curated by Adam Frank, Sara Melzer Gallery, New York, NY
Riverrun, Western Bridge, Seattle, WA
Parking, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, Sweden
Marathon Transfer, curated by John Weber, Weiner Fine Art, Chatham, NY

2003 The Outback Series 2003, curated by Lisa Kirk, New York, NY (matchbook project)
Paranoid/Parasite, curated by Susan M. Canning, Carrie Gallery, College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, NY
Shaking Glance, curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud, Im N i L Gallery, Brooklyn, NY
Ten and One Gallery, New York, NY

2002 La Luz De Jardins De Memores, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, Academia de France a Reme, Villa Medici, Rome, Italy
Substance, organized by Robert Heilweiss, New Images, New York, NY
Pastoral Past curated by Debra Singer, Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, New York, NY
Newer, Never-Land, curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud, Florida Atlantic University Art Gallery, Boca Raton, FL
Museum Storage, Moscow, Russia (catalogue)

2001 The Altoids Collection, curated by Robert Heckees, Neo- Winter Invitational, curated by Elena Sorokina, White Columns, New York, NY (catalogue)
Weatherspoon Art Museum, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC

2000 Into the Trees, Cameron Gallery, Limerick, Ireland
Odd Gloss, curated by Omar Lopez-Chahoud, Florida Atlantic University Art Gallery, Boca Raton, FL
Museum Storage, Moscow, Russia (catalogue)

1999 Life in Space: Phase 1: The Double-Barreled Airlock Project, presented by four Walls and CCAC, CCAC Montgomery Campus, San Francisco, CA

Biography

Jason Middlebrook was born in Jackson, Michigan in 1969. He lives and works in West Taghkanic, New York. Middlebrook received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of California at Santa Cruz, and a Master of Fine Arts from the San Francisco Art Institute, both in 1994. He has had solo exhibitions at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, the Green Dreams exhibition at the University of Vermont, and the Craft in Contemporary Art exhibition at the Fleming Museum. Middlebrook has also participated in a number of group exhibitions, including the Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery’s ‘Lives of the Hudson’ exhibition in Saratoga Springs, New York. His work has been featured in publications such as Art in America and Artforum. Middlebrook has been the recipient of several grants and awards, including the New York Foundation for the Arts and the Pollock-Krasner Foundation. He has been a faculty member at the Art Academy of London and has given lectures at institutions such as the Kunstverein Wolfsburg. Middlebrook has also curated exhibitions, including ‘Craft in Contemporary Art: Form, Balance, Joy’, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. His work explores themes of ecology and human impact on the environment, often using found materials and objects to create installations that comment on the relationship between art, nature, and society. Middlebrook’s work has been exhibited internationally and is held in several public collections. The artist has a strong commitment to environmental issues and has been involved in various public art projects that address ecological concerns.
Study for Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard, acrylic paint, and Sharpie marker
17 x 28 inches
Courtesy of the artist
Pile of Buildings (Detail), 2009
Cardboard boxes, Christmas lights, and paint
6½ x 14½ x 12 feet
Courtesy of the artist
Pile of Buildings, 2009
Cardboard boxes, Christmas lights, and paint
6½ x 14½ x 12 feet
Courtesy of the artist
ARTIST’S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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