

Dean Radinovsky's Secret Chapel

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On the corner of 57th Street, in view of the West Side Highway, a drafty warehouse houses a warren of artist studios. For two years, artist Dean Radinovsky visited his studio late at night, mixing mortar and stacking cinder blocks.

In 2008, he put the finishing touches on a highly unusual structure: a building-within-a-building — a small chapel, lined with abstract paintings, and softly illuminated by light bulbs covered in milk-glass coffee mugs.

But Radinovsky, along with the other artists that inhabit the warehouse, will have to give up their space at the end of August to make way for a school. The building will be turned over to



developers and construction crews.

As soon as this fall, it will be razed. Radinovsky's chapel will be destroyed.

The community arts organization [Chashama](#) currently manages the building. Chashama is a small not-for-profit based in Manhattan that works with real estate companies to convert fallow buildings into artist studios. The contracts that artists have for their spaces are always temporary. Once a deal is made or permits secured, developers move in and artists move out.

The building had already had multiple lives by the time Radinovsky arrived: it had served as a work space for the ArtKraft Strauss company, makers of the brilliant signs in Times Square, and it had been a car park for BMW.

So even as he attached the foundation of his structure — which he calls *Chapel Americana* — to the building's cement floors, Radinovsky knew that it would one day be demolished.

For him, the chapel was never about permanence. It was merely about being able to create something on a large scale (it's 12 by 16 feet), an urban version of the sacred meditation caves that he had visited on the isle of Crete. There is something incredibly tranquil about the space. Step into it and the belligerent sound of traffic immediately recedes. The eye is immediately

drawn to the wall of light he has created with cinder blocks and light bulbs. But hang out for a bit and the details begin to emerge: the abstract patterns on the walls, the individual logos on the vintage mugs, the cool colors on the wall immediately outside.

It is a jewel box of tranquility — made more special by the fact that few people ever knew it was there. And very soon, it no longer will be.

Learn more about Dean Radinovsky's work on his [website](#). Between now and the end of August, he is showing the chapel by appointment. You can set up a time to see it by e-mailing him at [contact\[at\]deanradinovsky\[dot\]org](mailto:contact[at]deanradinovsky[dot]org).