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Revolving Museum expands into studio space

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"This is more than we wanted. This is a good jump start for the Revolving Museum," said Beck, touring the coal heat bins that will soon become the Revolving Museum Lab and Studios.

As part of the building's transformation into loft apartments and a mini-mall, DeAngelis has made sure art plays a major role. He could have sold the space or turned it into a parking lot, but instead has donated the 3,000 square feet to the museum for the next 10 years.

"It's worth it to work with Jerry and the arts. This is what Lowell is all about now, I wish other developers would step up," said DeAngelis, an art enthusiast who collects carnival fanfare.

Since the museum and the Market Gallery are separated by an alley, the arrangement was hatched as soon as the two crossed paths. "When I met Jerry he told me he was looking for space and I couldn't refuse. I mean look at him can you turn this guy down?"

The lab Beck calls a "chapel for culture" will be accessed by an old metal fire door on the first floor. It opens to a large hallway with a boardwalk that veers down into a flight of stairs, like an alternative altar. Overhead pipes have been painted electric red and black in keeping with the museum's color scheme.

The walls will be used for exhibition space and Beck sees a mini-theater/experimental space where people can see the museum in action to anchor the gallery.

"When artists come in, they will respond to the space. This isn't a white wall gallery, so anything can happen," he said.

Somewhere between eight and 10 studios will be rented to artists and an educational workshop room will be available to the community. "I'd like to see it as a community space that any group can rent out," Beck said.

With another artistic outlet downtown, Beck says the city's arts district will really start to blossom. "The whole idea is to draw more artists here. I hope that artists see this as a place where they can show work," said Beck.

The museum also plans to open an outdoor movie theater and Beck hopes restaurants that share the alley, between Market and Middle streets, will start outdoor dining and entertainment back there.

"We want to turn the alley into an Artist Alley with murals changing every summer and outdoor workshops," he said.

The Revolving Museum Lab and Studios will open in June with an indoor/outdoor exhibit featuring work from construction workers who worked on the building, Market Gallery residents, DeAngelis' carnival collection and Revolving Museum artists.