

# Art squared: Murals, sculptures and more to enliven Memphis' Overton Square

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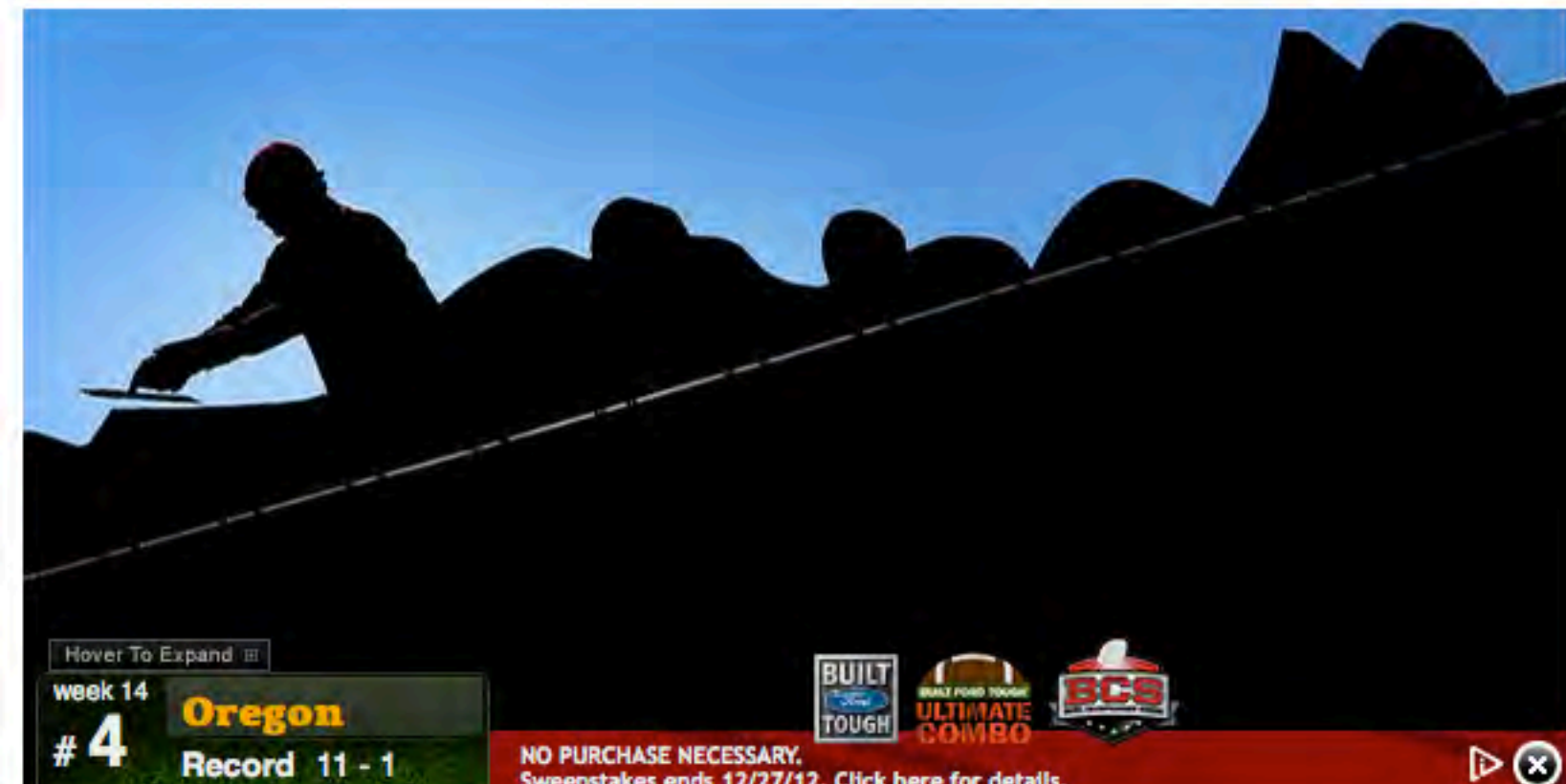


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Juan Carlos Aranda smooths out concrete peaks along the top of a wall on the north side of Bari Ristorante in Overton Square. The masonry work is part of a mural that will be painted on the wall depicting a stylized image of the entertainment district.



The first of many public-art projects is being installed in the redeveloping [Overton Square](#).



Carol DeForest

Loeb Properties won't reveal how much it's spending on the murals, sculptures, mosaics, stained glass and other work, but the weight of it all has the city's chief driver of public art gushing praise.

"Overton Square is being developed by a very enlightened developer who knows the value of art," said Christina Lanzl, executive director of UrbanArt.

The north-facing exterior wall of Bari Ristorante, 22 S. Cooper, has been prepped for artist David Lynch's dense, whimsical mural depicting familiar Overton Square buildings.

Yvonne Bobo is creating a monumental sculpture – to lord 25 feet over the main corner of Madison and Cooper – that plays off the entertainment district's thematic shapes: an O and a square.

Artists Anne J. Froning and Sean Murphy of Being:Art are transforming the Square's old bell tower into three things: In the middle, a giant wind chime that makes sound and triggers light; on top, a light beacon; and below, a spiraling marimba that passersby can play.

Those may be the biggest pieces, but they're just for starters.

Louis Loeb, referring to notes on his pad of legal-size paper, this week kept describing one project in the works after another: Stained glass panels by Suzy Hendrix for upstairs windows in the old TGIF Friday's restaurant; mosaics by Lea Holland; a 3D mural by Mary Norman for one of the new security offices; two more murals by Lynch, including one that works its way into a bike rack; and the restoration and display of two Thorne Edwards mosaics now at Memphis College of Art.

What was a tired, mostly vacant entertainment and restaurant district is getting nearly a \$40 million makeover.

Loeb Properties is spending about \$20 million to renovate the old buildings by the time the city's new \$15 million parking garage/flood retention structure opens in September. Once the parking garage opens, Hattiloo

Theatre will start building its new \$4 million theater.

The restored and new architecture alone will create a sense of place, but the art will make Overton Square a more special place, said Loeb, a partner with his brother, Robert Loeb.

"I refer to this as not just another development," Louis said. "It has special meaning."

He envisions the Midtown site becoming like a park or adult playground. "I really think this can become a gathering point where families, friends, people can just meet up here," he said. "And you can't do that at a suburban shopping center."



Louis Loeb



PHOTO COURTESY OF BEING:ART

One of the artistic touches at Overton Square will be this tower, which formerly had a store in its base. It will be converted to having a globe at the top, giant wind chimes in the middle and spinning light vibes inside the base.



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION  
COURTESY OF LOEB

A 25-foot-tall sculpture by Memphis artist Yvonne Bobo will stand at the main corner of Madison and Cooper. The "O" and cube shapes play off the district's name.



DRAWING COURTESY OF DAVID  
LYNCH

This David Lynch mural of familiar Overton Square buildings will decorate Bari Ristorante on South Cooper. It is expected to be the first of the square's public-art projects to be completed.

The scope of the Overton Square arts projects is so large that Loeb Properties has hired a long-established Memphis artist, Carol DeForest, to coordinate them.

"I'm calling Loeb Properties the 'dream client,' " DeForest said. All artists want a client to instruct them to create something really beautiful that the public will look at, she said.

The art should grab the attention of motorists driving by. "We've got to make a big splash with whatever we do," she said. "... You need to be hit by whatever it is."

The Loeb brothers learned from their late mother, Mimi Loeb, to appreciate art. She was an artist who studied at the Memphis Academy of Art.

"She loved art," Louis said. "She instilled an appreciation for art in us. I guess it's coming back out the other side."

Overton Square's artworks will be finished one by one; no single unveiling event is planned, Loeb said.

For example, Lynch's mural on the Bari building, to be executed by muralist Anthony Lee, should be the first big piece accomplished. Bobo already has made a five-foot model of the big corner sculpture. The tower chimes should be finished by mid-April.

"It will create a unique place that will help folks identify with the place," UrbanArt's Lanzl said of all the artwork. "It will stand out compared to other places. I think also by working with local artists you also get a wonderful local flavor."

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