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SCULPTOR SEEKS TO ILLUSTRATE HOW CULTURES ARE CONNECTED

KAMIKA DUNLAP, Mercury News

Los Gatos sculptor David **Middlebrook** likes to create art that connects people and their cultures. The well-known artist's latest piece titled "Tip," unveiled recently at his Santa Cruz mountain studio, highlights the contributions of ethnic groups in America.

A 20-ton white marble "iceberg" connected to a large anvil and a basalt column laden with fingerprints, **Middlebrook's** piece depicts one theory of how the Earth evolved and cultures came together.

"I want my work to be a guide for how we all came to this country and brought different backgrounds, skill sets and passion," **Middlebrook** said. "That's what makes our country exciting."

Middlebrook's sculpture is on display at his studio. The work, commissioned by a national public arts commission, is a part of the Milwaukee Iceberg Project.

Middlebrook was selected from a group of five finalists from across the country to create a sculpture for Gordon Park in Milwaukee. His artwork will be unveiled at a ceremony June 30.

"I feel honored," he said. "It's a dream for an artist to have their work on public view."

Middlebrook is an art professor who has taught at San Jose State University for 30 years.

Among his other works is a symbol-laced, 21-foot-high stone-and-metal piece titled "Step in Stone" on display near the Stanford University campus in Palo Alto.

The "Tip" sculpture includes artifacts depicting various ethnic groups and their contribution. For example, jazz and rap microphones symbolize African-Americans' contribution to music, computer symbols depict Asians' impact on technology and ballet slippers symbolize Russians' influence on ballet and other performing arts.

"I want to let people know how much we're alike and yet so different," **Middlebrook** said. "I really want my piece to connect with people."

Illustration:Photo

PHOTO: SPECIAL TO THE MERCURY NEWS

"Tip," by Los Gatos sculptor David **Middlebrook**, is a 20-ton white marble "iceberg"

connected to a large anvil and a basalt column laden with fingerprints.

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