

PRESS RELEASE

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JPEG available online

Exhibition: October 15, 2008 – January 30, 2009
Artist reception: Friday, January 9, 2009, 5 – 7:00 p.m.

OFF STATE STREET: FIGURATIVE EXPLORATIONS OF PERSONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

SAN JOSE, CA - Orchard Commercial North First ARTSpace presents "Off State Street", an art exhibition featuring playful and contemplative abstract paintings and photographs from Robert Chiarito, Lesley Louden, Andy Muonio, Robert Oblon, Mary Souza, Noah Wilson, and Tammy Jo Wilson. Whether viewing larger-than-life portraits of family members by Muonio or distorted, whimsical, and imaginative figures by Chiarito, who works from subconscious states of mind, you will certainly be surprised and delighted. Every artist featured in this exhibition pushes beyond the human form as subject and brings to our awareness, questions of personal and cultural identity.

The "Off State Street" exhibition marks the beginning of a new year of art exhibitions at Orchard Commercial, North First ARTSpace. Throughout 2008 - 2009, we will feature paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, sculpture, mixed media, and new media works from emerging and established artists living and working in the Bay Area, as well as artists affiliated with the San Jose State University Art & Design program, whether current faculty, alumni, or graduate students.

"By providing an alternative arts venue within a multi-tenant commercial building, we hope to support and promote local artists, encourage community involvement in the arts, as well as provide a model for other commercial buildings in the San Jose area."

- Joe Lewis, President of Orchard Commercial

The "Off State Street" exhibition opened on October 15 and will run through January 30, 2009. An artist reception is scheduled for Friday, January 9, 2009 from 5 – 7:00 p.m. Daily visiting hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and are free.

Robert Chiarito considers his latest whimsy and colorful abstract paintings a serious pursuit of play that begins with blind drawings on canvas and a desire to create an image that he would not consciously construct. Working from a subconscious state of mind, Chiarito remains open to images of the human figure that emerge from the canvas. The distorted figures found in his blind drawings suggest a variety of human emotions and sensations such as joy, anger,

fear, vulnerability, sexual desire, and humor. Although Chiarito abandons many paintings if the figure appears too beautiful, it's delightful to discover beauty in their less-than-perfected forms.

For over ten years, **Lesley Loudon** visits Evelyn in her home. Together, they enjoy baked zucchini nut bread and classical music, as Evelyn shares stories of her life beginning with her work as a secretary for a professional accounting firm fifty years ago. Documenting Evelyn's life experiences with video and photographs, Loudon gives special attention to Evelyn's intimate surroundings and the colorful objects that adorn her environment, sensitively recording and honoring Evelyn's individuality.

Working from video stills and memory, **Andy Muonio** paints larger-than-life portraits of family and friends. Using broad, sweeping brush strokes of color across an expansive 9' canvas surface, he captures the unique emotive expression of each individual, questioning the significance of the individual portrait in the digital age.

After many years working as a sculptor, **Robert Oblon** is immersed in creating three-dimensional abstract paintings. In the "Puzzle Piece" series, Oblon cuts, glues, paints, and assembles plywood and canvas shapes to create abstract paintings that reference both biological and human forms. His irregular structures, painted with luminous metallic and interference colors emphasize movement and consider the idea of life forms being in constant motion and transformation.

An abstract figurative painter, **Mary Souza** paints the human figure inspired by the mysteries of body and spiritual connections, communications, and transformations. Engaged in her painting process, she alternates between building and removing layers of oil paint to create a surface that seems worn with time. Her figures seem to be moving through a series of transitional spaces, as layers of paint simultaneously obscure and reveal the subjects.

As an artist in residence at the San Francisco Dump, **Noah Wilson** searched the grounds through piles of refuse for unknown objects. Through this process of discovery, he repeatedly found photographs of a person or event that at one time seemed significant, a moment in time that someone else captured on film. Wondering why someone would throw away keepsakes, Wilson collected and re-photographed these discarded images. The re-photographs seem to become both a window and mirror for personal reflection.

After viewing old photographs of student nursing classes from 1969 to the present, **Tammy Jo Wilson** reflects upon her mother working as a nurse and the role of nursing over time, exploring questions of gender and cultural identity.

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About Orchard Commercial North First ARTSpace

Orchard Commercial is Silicon Valley's most comprehensive commercial real estate operations company. We provide property management, leasing, construction, and mechanical services, specializing in high-tech R&D, office, warehouse, and manufacturing facilities. For more than 35 years, we've worked with investors, brokers, and developers to build value in Silicon Valley. Orchard Commercial possesses local expertise, unmatched customer service, and commitment to excellence.

Orchard maintains a long history of commitment to the Silicon Valley community. In May 2007, Orchard Commercial opened the North First ARTSpace, an alternative art exhibition venue located within a multi-tenant commercial building. Both emerging and established artists living and working in the Bay Area are considered for thematic group exhibitions. The North First ARTSpace presents up to four exhibitions each year for tenants and the community to enjoy. For more information about the Orchard Commercial North First ARTSpace, please visit

www.orchardcommercial.com/about/community.html.

Visiting Orchard Commercial North First ARTSpace

Address: 2665 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95134

Phone: 408-922-0400

Hours: Guests are welcome Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.; closed Saturday and Sunday

Admission: Free

Map and directions: Visit www.orchardcommercial.com

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