

# OPENSATELLITE

A RESIDENCY PROGRAM FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

**For Immediate Release**

## **ZOE STRAUSS: WORKS IN PROGRESS**

**CURATED BY ABIGAIL GUAY AND GRETCHEN L. WAGNER**

Exhibition Dates: December 1, 2007 – January 12, 2008

**Opening Event and Slide Show: Saturday, December 1, 6-9 PM**

Open Satellite Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 12-6 PM, second Thursday of the month 12-8 PM

During her residency at Open Satellite, Philadelphia-based photographer and installation artist Zoe Strauss presents her first solo exhibition in the Northwest. Focusing her camera on the gritty neighborhoods of her hometown, Strauss creates tough, emotional portraits of the residents and architecture populating the streets of South Philadelphia, Kensington, and other working class areas. Her images, each considered part of a larger series begun in 2000, are ferocious studies of the American inner city, depicting prickly incidences of drug use, prostitution, and a hard-knock life. Still other compositions capture derelict factories and shuttered row houses left to ruin over many years as the United States turned a blind-eye on its poorest neighborhoods. As Roberta Smith of the New York Times explains, "Ms. Strauss's images are not without tenderness, but their harsh, unblinking force is a bit like a punch in the face. They show us what most Americans don't want to see."

In 1995, Strauss founded the Philadelphia Public Art Project, which she defines as, "a one-woman organization whose mission is to give the citizens of Philadelphia access to art in their everyday lives." For the past seven years, Strauss has accumulated her images, and annually, she stages *Under I-95*, an exhibition hung beneath a highway overpass in South Philadelphia. Recent photos adorn the massive concrete pillars, photocopies of these sell for \$5 each, and a slide show of her images plays along to a soundtrack of rock-and-roll classics, pop, hip-hop, and blues. A version of this projection appeared, to great acclaim, at the 2006 Whitney Biennial in New York.

In the Seattle metropolitan area, Strauss continues her visual study of broken promises engendered by failed social and economic programs. Specifically, she looks to the transitional Factoria neighborhood of Bellevue, citing the district's ambitious, yet unfulfilled, intentions—suggested by its name—to become an industrial manufacturing hub. Open Satellite presents Strauss's new Seattle-area photographs, and a selection of her earlier work, as projections and large-format prints.

Born in Philadelphia, Strauss received a camera for her thirtieth birthday and started taking pictures of life in the city's neighborhoods. In 2005, she received a Pew Fellowship and was

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selected for the 2006 Whitney Biennial. She has had solo exhibitions at the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art, the Acuna-Hansen Gallery in Los Angeles, and Silverstein Photography in Chelsea. This fall, Strauss received a fellowship from United States Artists.

**About the Curators:**

Abigail Guay is the exhibitions director of Open Satellite. From 2002-2006, she worked as a project manager at the Jenny Holzer Studio (Hoosick Falls, NY). Guay has curated shows at the Williams College Museum of Art (Williamstown, MA) and the Contemporary Artists Center (North Adams, MA).

Gretchen L. Wagner is a curatorial assistant at The Museum of Modern Art (New York, NY). She has curated exhibitions at the D.U.M.B.O. Arts Center (Brooklyn, NY), the Tang Museum at Skidmore College (Saratoga Springs, NY), the Williams College Museum of Art, and the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (Madison, WI), among other institutions.

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