



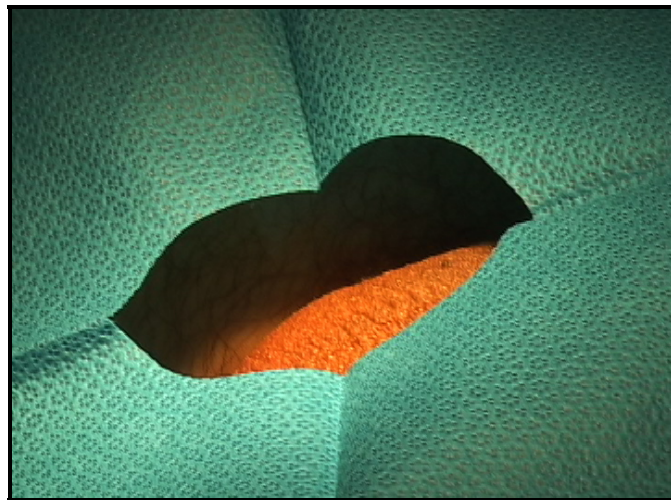
21 Grand
416 25th St (at Broadway)
www.21grand.org
(510) 444-7263

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Darren Jenkins/ strictfathermodel@gmail.com

JORDAN ESSOE – Strictfathermodel

September 19 – October 28, 2008
Reception: Friday October 3, 7:00-10:00pm

Gallery hours: Thursdays 4-8pm, Fridays 4-6pm, Saturdays and Sundays 1-6pm



Jordan Essoe: **August 6**, 2008, digital video

21 Grand will present a new exhibition of paintings, photographs, sculpture, and video by San Francisco-based artist Jordan Essoe.

OAKLAND, Calif. – 11 August 2008 - 21 Grand is pleased to announce *Strictfathermodel*, an exhibition by Jordan Essoe, opening September 15 and running through October 28, 2008. This is the artist's first one-person show at the gallery, which first presented his work in 2002.

“How does the potential to create new life, or deny it, become a moral dilemma?”

The *Strictfathermodel* exhibition asks this question, revolving around a vasectomy the artist has undertaken as the centerpiece of a ninety-nine day performance. Inspired by a 1937 notebook entry by Albert Camus about a theoretical book on morality that contains ninety-nine blank pages, the daily rituals of this private performance are documented through black and white photographs of vacant sky and square-shaped semen stains on paper. Combining two historical definitions of the square ideogram as both a symbol of “man” and “ground,” Essoe uses a contour of the shape to stand for the “individual within the world,” and places it in isolation.

This exhibition title is taken from George Lakoff's "Nation as Family" metaphor. Outlined in his book *Moral Politics*, Lakoff contrasts two distinct ideas of authority and morality, "Strict Father" and "Nurturant Parent," and explains how these binary models inform the decisions we make in both domestic and political spheres. With this exhibition Essoe asks "What moral system is used to make decisions for and about children that have not been conceived, and for the nascent community that will exist without them? There is a line that can be drawn between a refusal to have your own children and what feels like an act of violence against them, against their family, and against their world."

A consistent focus of Essoe's work is a literal and physical integration of himself into his projects. With *Strictfathermodel* a significant amount of the artist's personal history also becomes a principle actor, engaging with the tradition of the illustrated journal in an implicit bridging between life and art. A small painting of the evening sky is based on a photograph taken on the date of Essoe's spontaneous engagement to his future wife – a day that also coincided with the couple's yet unknown pregnancy that would end in miscarriage. Other works in the exhibition include a video of the artist's vasectomy operation itself and a sculpture that contains over seven years of his fingernail and toenail clippings. The exhibition ends with a large painting of an image bookmarked by his late Hungarian grandfather that depicts dead students and protestors photographed during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. "Strict Father" rationale describes the world as an indiscriminately dangerous place and this image offers potential testimony.

"Because this project is about the intersection of morality and mortality, it is essentially also a reflection on blankness," says Essoe, "and how blankness should be understood as both occupancy and absence, as both prosperity and dormancy, and as something fertile that is simultaneously sterile." These paintings, photographs, sculpture, and video works utilize a spare use of color and a free use of negative space to address the indifference of existence, but also to invoke the psychological and legal containers we erect around selfhood, parenthood, and citizenship. *Strictfathermodel* confronts the moral and philosophical repercussions of surgical sterilization and the meaning of absentee nurturing in an increasingly global society.

Jordan Essoe is a San Francisco-based artist whose interdisciplinary exhibition projects focus on sociopolitical and psychological issues of property, identity, exile, and war. His work has most recently been exhibited at TART, San Francisco; The Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA; Scope Miami, Miami, FL; Intersection for the Arts, San Francisco; PLAYSPACE Gallery, San Francisco; Swarm, Oakland, CA; Red House Gallery, Venice, CA; Meneer de Wit Gallery, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Ha'Kibbutz Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel; and The Zebra Poetry Film Award, Berlin, Germany. His poetry and critical writing have been published nationally and internationally, and he is co-founder of the Humane Slaughter Acts Performance Festival.

Additional features of this project are located at <http://jordanessoie.blogspot.com>

Please join us at the reception on Friday, October 3, 7-10pm, a part of the Oakland Art Murmur.

For further information please contact:

Darren Jenkins at the gallery at 510 444-7263 / strictfathermodel@gmail.com or visit www.21grand.org

Contact Jordan Essoe at 925 457-8442 / jordan@essoie.com or visit www.essoie.com