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The Art of Building Community
Photographic portraits by Donna Granata
Focus on the Masters Portrait Series

John Spoor Broome Library, California State University Channel Islands
September 3 through October 7, 2009
Artist's Reception: Thursday, September 24, 6-8PM.

California State University Channel Islands Exhibitions Gallery presents "The Art of Building Community", an exhibition featuring photographic portraits by Donna Granata from her Focus on the Masters (FOTM) Portrait Series at the John Spoor Broome Library on the CSUCI campus. The public is invited to attend the Artist's Reception on Thursday, September 24, 6-8PM.

The FOTM Portrait Series is an innovative approach to educate our citizens about the importance of the arts to a healthy community. This exhibition features photographic portraits of significant artists whose lives and works have exerted great influence in the community. Each of the artists portrayed is a FOTM documented subject. FOTM documents ten artists each year for having achieved mastery of their craft, gaining the respect of their peers and maintaining an active role in the development of the arts in Ventura County. The portrait series vividly portrays the breadth and depth of cultural achievement in Ventura County. Artists of all ages, working in various media and from diverse cultural backgrounds are featured.

Founder and Executive Director Donna Granata is well-known for her portraits of outstanding artists. A Brooks Institute graduate, holder of an honorary Masters degree from that institution and a member of the faculty, Donna has created more than 140 photographic portraits specific to this series, each one revealing the character of the artist.

Commenting on her work, Granata says: "When the portraits are shown in a large group, the viewer often is amazed that these acclaimed artists all reside within Ventura County or have traveled to our community and have influenced our artists. The artists photographed are no longer anonymous, not longer just a name. They are viewed as vibrant human beings. The portraits become ambassadors of Ventura County's diverse cultural community raising the consciousness of the viewer by presenting the humanity behind the creative process. I consider my FOTM Portrait Series to be my life's work."

The current exhibit will feature three new portraits: Tesi Sanchez-Halpert, George Yepes and Linda Vallejo.

Tesi Sanchez-Halpert of Moorpark is a sculptor who recycles everyday metal castoffs into whimsical objects. In 2004 Tesi suffered a massive stroke and was told she would likely not be able to continue her rigorous work as a sculptor. That challenge was met with good humor and fierce tenacity. Her work and her life story is an inspiration to all.

George Yepes' work is passionate, filled with blazing colors and tackling emotional subjects. He is a leading figure in Chicano art with work that transcends cultural boundaries. He founded the Academia de Arte Yepes to encourage the development of artistic talent. In addition to his work with the Academia, he is frequently a lecturer at local community colleges and galleries.

Linda Vallejo is as important as an artist as she is as an advocate for issues on race, gender equity and the business of art. Working in mixed-media, she draws on Native American tradition of respect for the earth and Latino cultural heritage.

The exhibit at the Broome library will also feature over 40 portraits of past Master Artists documented over a 15 year period and will reflect the diversity of our community.

The new portraits and exhibition were made possible in large part by a 2009 Artist in Community Partnership grant awarded in May to Granata by Ventura County Arts Council. The grants program is part of the ArtsLIVE in Ventura County initiative; a collaboration between the Ventura County Community Foundation and the Ventura County Arts Council, funded by The James Irvine Foundation. The exhibit is a collaborative effort featuring contributions from Affinity Bank, Focus on the Masters, California State University Channel Islands, and individual donors. Reflective of its commitment to building community, FOTM strives to collaborate with other community resources and relies heavily on the contributions of dedicated volunteers and supporters.

Focus on the Masters is a unique non-profit archive and arts education organization. The extensive archive includes information on more than 1,300 artists, all of whom have had an impact on the history of the arts in Ventura County. From the archives spring other programs, such as the monthly meet-the-artist live-to-tape interviews known as the *Tuesday Talks*. The *Talks* bring to the forefront of the community leading area artists who are able to discuss their artistic development, life story and body of work before an audience. A selection of the interviews are made available to a wider public through airing on local cable access television.

The John Spoor Broome Library features numerous dramatic exhibition areas located throughout the landmark building that was designed by world-renowned architect, Sir Norman Foster. The University Library is located near the center of campus on University Drive. Tours of the library are regularly scheduled twice per week two times per day year round. The exhibition is on display through Wednesday, October 7.

The Ventura County Arts Council (VCAC) is a nonprofit public benefit corporation committed to supporting and strengthening the arts throughout Ventura County. ArtsLIVE in Ventura County is a three-year initiative designed to increase support for the arts in Ventura County. The unique, new **Artist in the Community Partnership Grants Program** spotlights the instrumental benefits of the arts. Created by the Ventura County Arts Council, the grant program supports local artists in all disciplines as they apply their project leadership and creative problem solving skills to issues identified by their community partner organization.

For more information about CSUCI:

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For more information about Focus on the Masters:

www.FocusOnTheMasters.com

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To learn more call the Ventura County Arts Council:

www.venturacountyartscouncil.org

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For more information on ArtsLive:

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