



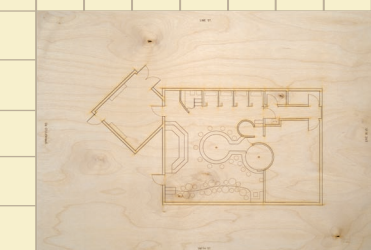
In collaboration with Light Work, The Warehouse Gallery initiated an Artist-in-Residence program in order to support artists and give them the opportunity to create new work in Syracuse for The Warehouse Gallery. The first participant selected for the program was artist Kianga Ford. During her three-month residency from October 15, 2008 to January 15, 2009, Ford created remarkable new work that explores the intersection of the sacred and the profane in a dynamic response to the contemporary Syracuse landscape.

The exhibition, titled *Landscapes and Interiors*, is a meditation on the condition of post-industry, its economics, and the boundaries and relations that are influenced by both. In the main gallery, *Landscapes - Syracuse 2008* is a set of narrative landscape "paintings" that describe the view from various houses of worship in the city. They are paired with the fantasy domains of strip clubs, reduced to a set of architectural plans in *Interiors - Syracuse 2008*, a collaboration with Syracuse University School of Architecture faculty Scott Ruff.

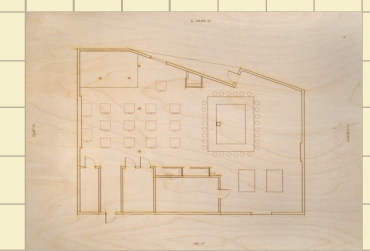
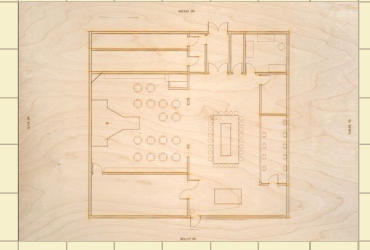
Also in the main gallery, *Hymns for Post-Industry—Congregation No. 1* incorporates sound and video of "hymns" that are culled from the texts of local developers. They are projected onto the walls that lead to the adjacent gallery where *Sanctuary* is created as a functional social lounge scored by Muzak.

The final piece, *Interview with Reality*, is installed in the restroom of The Warehouse Gallery and is a video interview with a Syracuse-based entertainer who is known by the stage moniker "Reality." The interview is combined with scenes of her performing to the soundtrack *SpaceTrash—The Stripper's Cut*, composed and performed by Reality herself.

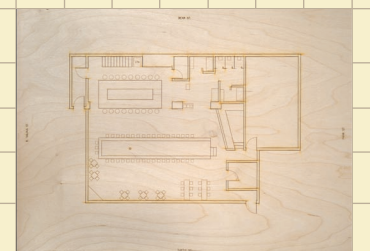
In a disolate hour, the steady persistent snow  
 flows over with no leaves and little  
 logo-like recycling in front of fall and sky-colored neo-stories.  
 The call to all glances bewilder and life gently  
 away from the warm brick facade to an uncommitted wind.  
 It is reduced by light cones, however,  
 with all the sticky and promise of a close-out bargain.  
 A single Census box drifts across the pill,  
 the deep quiet fall of innocent equilibrium.  
 No one walks to Mojave's.



Perched on the tiny rise on the corner, the building, with its  
 steady columns, windows over a set of stairs that are never closed.  
 Behind the building, the parking lot side entrance is recessed above,  
 overlooking exposures with cars that spill onto the incidental street,  
 sharing old and even-day parking all together.  
 It is engulfed by multi-gle, apartments and condos with signs that  
 always seem to have some vacancy, if not now, then perhaps in fall.  
 The Madison Court Apartments entrance leads the solid presence.  
 The glacial entrance of the old school is now peopled by families with  
 groceries and snow shovels, nested between the temple and Chase  
 Playhouse.  
 At the corner, the 443 picks up students at a signless stop  
 to abandon them between downtown and main campus.



The slanted pathlines into the first traffic,  
 which is steady yet, despite the snow.  
 Winter can cast a golden light across the street,  
 connecting the stairs to Ferry Jones, who sells used cars and also  
 new and used furniture. To the left a ways, Blue Truck's business  
 renews the pace of the side signs and empty exposures.  
 Explorers pass and penetrate the ground with rambling bean.  
 On the dusty pine streets, cars move slowly through the coils of  
 a density of small, neighborhood churches, tucked between street houses.  
 In the middle of the block, New Communist Baptist advertises a place  
 where "everybody is somebody."  
 "The stop sign hide "stop war!"



### Exhibition Checklist

<b>Alpine</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>Paradise Found</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>Islamic Society of Central New York</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	<b>Hymns for Post-Industry— Congregation No. 1, 2009</b> Digital projection
<b>Lookers</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>The Club at Adult World</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>Believer's Chapel</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	<b>Installation Photographs</b>
<b>Night Lights</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>Church of The Assumption</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	<b>People's A.M.E. Zion</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	Cover: Detail, <i>Landscapes and Interiors</i>
<b>Bada Bing</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>St. Lucy's Catholic Church</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	<b>Onondaga Nation United Methodist Church</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	Above: Detail, <i>Sanctuary</i>
<b>Fantasy Nights</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>St. Paul's Cathedral, Episcopal</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	In the Vault: <b>Sanctuary, 2009</b> Mixed media installation, scored by Muzak	Inside: 1. Interior view, <i>Sanctuary</i>
<b>Diamond Dolls</b> From <i>Interiors - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on wood panel 18 x 24 inches	<b>Temple Society of Concord</b> From <i>Landscapes - Syracuse 2008</i> Laser cut on paper 18 x 32 inches	In the restroom: <b>Interview with Reality, 2009</b> Video transferred to DVD TRT 7:15 minutes	2. Gallery view, <i>Landscapes and Interiors</i>
			3. Gallery view, <i>Hymns for Post-Industry— Congregation No. 1</i>
			4. Interior view, <i>Interview with Reality</i>
			5. Detail, <i>Landscapes and Interiors</i>
			6. Interior view, <i>Sanctuary</i>

### THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

Syracuse University  
 350 West Fayette Street  
 Syracuse, NY 13202

The Warehouse Gallery is an international contemporary art venue of the SUArt Galleries at Syracuse University. The gallery's mission is to present exhibitions and programs by artists whose work engages the community in a dialogue regarding the role the arts can play in illuminating critical issues of our life and times.

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## KIANGA FORD LANDSCAPES AND INTERIORS

15 JANUARY-14 MARCH, 2009

THE WAREHOUSE GALLERY

GUIDE #6

Shortly after I arrived in Syracuse to begin my residency I met Isaac Spradlin, a student in the Goldring Arts Journalism program at Syracuse University who interviewed me as part of his course work. I solicited questions about the project from the audience on the night of the opening. The following is my response to questions from Spradlin (IS) and audience members (DR, LR).

-Kianga Ford

**IS: I believe you said that Landscapes and Interiors are separate series, but you interlaced them. What overlaps of church and adult entertainment did you find in Syracuse?**

For me these are two separate bodies of work. I'm interlacing them in a conversation about this place. I like the idea of thinking about landscapes and interiors together, because, if you think about it, they're the most fundamental two elements of location that there are, and it's some combination of the two that gives you a sense of place. I'm very attracted to the apparent simplicity of this idea. At the same time, each of these series speaks in its own language and to its own set of concerns.

*Landscapes* is about the language of painting and its materials as much as it's about churches in Syracuse. Can you use words to paint a scene? Is narrative a valid visual medium? Is my use of color and line on paper to describe a place sufficient to make it part of a tradition of landscapes? Of course, it's not insignificant that they are views of the landscape from the perspective of houses of worship. Our encounters with "real" places have always been overwritten by discourse, perhaps none more so than the discourses of religion.

*Interiors* shifts the conversation to the language of architecture, but it uses its tools to study rather than to build. In my collaboration with Scott Ruff, we talked about how to create a plan for a structure that already exists and for whom this could matter. What you end up with is something like an architectural ethnography based on our own participation in those spaces. There were no tape measures involved, though the pieces are proportionally accurate and the models are to scale—the plans rely a great deal on time spent. We had a few good laughs about how much thought you can fit on a cocktail napkin.

So, each of those pieces has their own work and their own operations, but showing them together is central to the argument of the show, which is about the desires for communion that are common to both the exotic dance venue and the house of worship.

**IS: What other kinds of interiors did you think about as you constructed your installations? What didn't make the cut, and why not?**

For me every interior matters...I think...the public and semi-public perhaps more than the domestic. The hotel lobby is a dream location for me, the mall food court, the coffee shop, the inside of the bus, the bus station, the crazy sci-fi interior of Sakana-Ya, a local Japanese restaurant. These spaces are always in the mix of what I'm thinking, but, here in Syracuse, I followed the flow of what naturally stood out. There's an unusual density of churches here, and also, given the size of the city, it stands out that there are eight functioning live adult entertainment venues.

**IS: You've worked with composers before in your career, and Reality put together the music for the rest room, so why did you choose Muzak over any other kind of sound for the lounge [Sanctuary]?**

I think that actually goes back a bit to your question about what kinds of interiors didn't make the cut. I'm really fascinated by the uses and origins of Muzak—it becomes like a sonic overlay that mediates a good portion of our lives—it's at the mall and at your dentist's office, it's in the restaurant and at the airport. Because of that, incorporating Muzak allowed me to reference a whole range of environments, even while focusing on the lounge as a form. I do really enjoy my collaborations with composers—the scores they create are undeniably essential to the experiences that I've been able to offer through my work, but, in some ways, those collaborations are always responding to the field of audio architecture (which they describe as "emotion by design") that Muzak has pioneered, so for me its very meaningful to be able to collaborate with them directly. Even John Cage is responding to Muzak; if you're interested in the social implications of sound, I think it's a force that's quite impossible to ignore. Before I leave that question, I want to also say that my collaboration with Reality was also a bit out of the ordinary, inasmuch as *Space Trash—The Stripper's Cut* was a song that she'd already recorded. That it is such an incredible fit for the piece speaks to the larger affinity of our

ideas. When we first talked about incorporating her music into the project, she laughed and said, "I know what song you want." She was totally right.

**IS: Interacting with people is a big part of your process and the final execution. But the only humans in your show are Reality (whose face is washed out by overexposure) and the disembodied voices of people reading the projected texts. Why?**

It's true that there aren't many humans depicted in my work, but all of my work is awaiting a viewer, who is very much a part of it. *Sanctuary* doesn't become a functioning lounge until people are in it and they've invested it with their own social desires and agendas—a friend you haven't had time to catch up with, a lover you haven't been close enough to all day, a stranger who is well-positioned to be met. *Hymns for Post-Industry* wasn't complete as a piece until the opening night audience came to engage it as a "congregation." Until they had a chance to read the text, to embrace it, resist it, feel moved by it or alienated by it, it just wasn't done. Their voices remain in the space as a remnant of their very real presence. And Reality isn't really there for you to get to, she's there, in this washed out way that you describe, to provoke you to think about your own desire to see her, so you are at least as much the question of that work as she is.

**LR: The lounge [Sanctuary] seems to be a combination of church and play. Which elements did you try to incorporate into the construction of the lounge?**

*Sanctuary* was my attempt to make a middle space between the church and the club. For me that space is usually occupied by the lounge, but I didn't find much of that here in Syracuse, so I set out to see if I could re-create the lounge, using the church and the club as prototypes and borrowing from their forms. The two platforms and the screen marry the physical elements of the pulpit and the dancers' runway and create a performance space, while the bench seats were a pretty direct citation of the pew and the screen and lit tables of stained glass.

**IS: For the Reality installation [Interview with Reality], did you expect the audience to leave the door closed or open? How does this decision change the piece?**

That goes back to some of the decoding of *Interiors*. The VIP rooms are the privileged spaces of the dance clubs—whether or not you have a door that you can close and the degree of privacy that's possible is what determines the value of the space. A semi-isolated room that you share with other people is worth less than a single room with a curtain, is worth less than one with a door. And then there is the fundamental performative premise of the club, which is basically about whether you can take these very private desires and activities and make them part of shared experience in public space. I think you run into the questions of this piece in the bathroom installation in a similar way that you might experience them in a club, whether you've closed the door and you're watching the video while peeing or you're in there with five strangers and the door is open.

**DR: Is this a city defined more by strip clubs and Nojaim's [grocery store] than by churches and cultural institutions?**

I think it's fair to say that it's a city defined by a combination of these things and not one more than another. I did a lot of "ride-alongs" with a local taxi driver as part of my research for this work. With the taxi drivers, there's an hour in the early morning when the city is defined by the clubs, and all of the dancers need to be driven home. With the cultural workers, I would hear other kinds of facts, like that, despite being one of the most impoverished communities in the US, the particular area of the near Westside that's served by Nojaim's is in measurably better health, because Nojaim's has a fresh produce section. To me, these are as important as the fact that one of the major Episcopal churches has a weekly service in Dinka or that there are more than twenty-five culture-related institutions downtown. The city is really defined for me at the level of these details.

**LR: What will happen to the work once the exhibition ends? How will it function outside or inside of Syracuse since it's a site-specific work?**

Syracuse becomes one site in a broader comparative project about this window in time. These projects will always be about Syracuse, but the real work is in putting these micro-studies together at the end of the decade or however long I'm able to study place in this way.

## Acknowledgements

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**Kianga Ford** works primarily with sound and environment. Using design-based installation, sound, performance, and site-specific projects to create scored environments, her works explore the dynamics of contemporary social identity, proximity, intimacy, and relationship. Her work has been shown at venues including The Studio Museum in Harlem; USF Verftet (Bergen, Norway); Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston; The Banff Centre (Alberta, Canada); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami; The Contemporary Museum in Baltimore; and the 2006 California Biennial at the Orange County Museum of Art. She is a current Creative Capital grantee and a recipient of the California Community Foundation fellowship for emerging artists. She has recently been awarded a grant by the Asian Cultural Council to pursue a new project in Japan. Ford is Assistant Professor in the Studio for Interrelated Media at Massachusetts College of Art. She lives and works in Los Angeles and Boston.

**J. Isaac Spradlin** is a master's student in the Goldring Arts Journalism Program at Syracuse University with a concentration in visual art and literature. He has written and reported on art, culture, technology, and science.

Founded in 2005 by a generous gift from arts patron and Syracuse University trustee Lola Goldring and her husband Allen, The Goldring Arts Journalism Program is the premier master's degree program in arts journalism. The Goldring program offers specific training in arts writing as well as opportunities for cross-disciplinary arts learning.

