ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work investigates the Mormon church, specifically its transition from a revolutionary religious movement to a mainstream institution. As the church Joseph Smith founded has grown to a worldwide organization, its leaders have made strides to downplay its radical beginnings. By making efforts toward wider ecumenical acceptance (and abandoning economic separatism and polygamy), they have constructed a public face centered on the ideal of the American 'middle' class nuclear family. Starting from their position of extreme radicalism Mormons adapted to the mainstream well enough to become nearly invisible.

Many people today know about the Mormon church from its long and successful campaign of television commercials. In addition, recent network news programs such as *Nightline* and 60 *Minutes* have run segments on the church and its culture. 60 *Minutes* featured famous representatives from professional spheres that typify Mormondom: sports (Steve Young), business (Bill Marriott), politics (Orrin Hatch). Television is a central tool in the effort to project a clean, respectable image for Mormonism. Interestingly the inventor of the television, Philo T. Farnsworth, was a Mormon and native of my home state Utah.

The suite of paintings "Twelve Famous Mormons" focuses on the end result of the Mormon struggle: acceptance by the larger culture and transformation into a religion of the American suburbs. In these paintings I am exploring an alternative public image of Mormonism. The project seeks to undermine this microculture's conception of itself and to invent a new image of Mormons in the culture at large. The figures I've chosen are involved in a wider range of activity than those generally presented by the church. The number of women depicted is equal to the number of men to counter the male dominated church culture. And one portrait of a "mythic member" represents a persistent cultural pattern of perpetuating rumors of who is, or was, a famous Mormon.

The claim to famous Mormons by the institutional and cultural churches is an expression of a people seeking to legitimize themselves. Over the last hundred years Mormons have been incredibly adept at moving from cultural outcasts to the center of American respectability. These paintings project a more complex image than the carefully constructed face of contemporary Mormonism.

Lane Twitchell, New York City, 1997

PAINTINGS

Cover: "Philo T. Farnsworth," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

Back: "Sonia Johnson," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 20: "Eliza R: Snow," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

. 20: "Joseph S," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 42: "Mark Hofmann," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 102: "Eldridge Cleaver," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 102: Roseanne Darr, 12 x 14 latex on panel, 199

n. 136: "Apple Perry" 12" v 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 162: "Marie Osmond," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 162: "Gordon Jump," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 168: "Wayne Thiebaud," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997

p. 168: "Harper Pitt," 12"x 14" latex on panel, 1997