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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BRUCE TAPOLA
FEBRUARY 18TH – MARCH 18TH

Midway Contemporary Art is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Saint Paul-based painter Bruce Tapola. This will be the inaugural exhibition at Midway Contemporary Art's new gallery space in Northeast, Minneapolis. There will be an opening reception for the artist and public on Saturday, February 18th from 6-8pm. The exhibition will continue through March 18th. Regular gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11am-5pm.

For this exhibition, Bruce Tapola will be presenting a new series of oil paintings completed over the past year. These modest-scaled canvases depict a cluttered landscape of bearded men, cool modernist interiors, craggy southwestern vantages, abstract fields of color, and archaeological ruins. Taken as a whole, there is a less than specific narrative to be gathered from these paintings. Instead they seem to suggest an aura of transcendental "back to nature" movements in Europe and the United States that began in the early part of the last century. More representation paintings present groups of people sitting in sun-bleached landscapes, men standing in front of beached canoes, and clunky pyramids, while more acidic abstracted compositions with suggestive titles such as *Get off the speaker towers* allude to crowded concert stages. While the dense and textured paint surfaces offer a loose and seemingly naïve style, the work is invested in a much more sophisticated use of appropriated imagery.

Anyone familiar with Tapola's work over the past decade knows that he traffics in the world of instructional books, old postcards, posters, catalogs for DIY'ers and new-agers, comic books, and paperbacks. They serve as source material in the production of bodies of work that have maintained a pop-sensibility while also offering light institutional critique (such as his *Total Study Center* installation at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts from 2001). Their positioning in relationship to the final canvases offers an insight into how Tapola thinks through painting. His appropriation is based less on mediated images of advertising, fashion or mass media and more on the slow media of books.

Throughout the development of this particular group of canvases, Tapola has described them functioning as film stills. This is particularly instructive in light of the fact that one of paperbacks that recently became a main focus is a slim, illustrated volume on film theory. The specific subject matter of this book sheds some light on how Tapola's reproductive strategies work in his paintings. What does it mean to have a painting that is reproducing a reproduction of a still that has been selected from a film? Particularly a book whose text focuses on the critical analysis of film. In many ways his recent interest in the specifics of the ways these texts and images function link Tapola's project to another artist who has utilized books throughout his career – Allen Ruppersberg. Like Ruppersberg, Tapola's specific interest in the book or page and its relation to painting centers around their abilities to function as devices that can suggest that the very acts of reading, drawing, seeing, and meaning are intertwined and very much open to interpretation.

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Bruce Tapola has exhibited in solo exhibitions with Clough-Hanson Gallery, Memphis; SooVac, Minneapolis; GV/AS, Brooklyn; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis; and Speedboat, St. Paul. Selected group exhibitions include: Transpace, Normal, IL; Van Harrison Gallery, Chicago; Locust Projects, Miami; General Store, Milwaukee; the Soap Factory, Minneapolis; Spaces, Cleveland; the Waiting Room, Minneapolis; and Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis. His work has been written about in New American Painting, ARTFORUM, Artpapers, New York Times, City Pages, New Art Examiner. Tapola is an Associate Professor at St. Cloud State University.

For more information, please contact the gallery at 612+605+4504 or info@midwayart.org.