

Press Release – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 16, 2005
Contact: Carissa Hussong, Executive Director, 901.525.0880

City Art Project Completed in Orange Mound Open to the Public February 21

Memphis, TN – The UrbanArt Commission is pleased to announce the completion of **four murals by local artist Vitus Shell** in the new Orange Mound Community Services Center. The center, located at Park Avenue and David, **opens to the public on February 21 with a grand opening event** at 10:00 AM. This is the second project to be completed as part of the City of Memphis Percent-for-Art Program.

The UAC, working in conjunction with the City of Memphis and the City Council-appointed Public Art Oversight Committee, commissioned local artist Vitus Shell to create four murals for the interior of the building. The murals depict different facets of the Orange Mound community, including people, schools and sports.

Vitus worked closely with the **Orange Mound Collaborative** to collect information from Orange Mound residents about their history and experiences in the neighborhood. The memorabilia that Vitus collected was copied and used as the background of the murals.

Images of people were also taken from the memorabilia and painted onto the backgrounds. The result is a mixture of old and new, and a creative interpretation of life in Orange Mound.

Vitus has stated that, “Orange Mound’s strong sense of neighborhood pride and unity reminds me of my hometown of Monroe, Louisiana.”

Vitus Shell is a graduate of the Memphis College of Art. He has served as an apprentice to local artist Brenda Joysmith, and on the Soulsville Gateway Project. He has also lead his own projects, such as a mural for the National Civil Rights Museum’s NBA show and creating a poster for the South Main Arts Festival. He also exhibits his work across the country.

In addition to the artwork at the Community Center, the UAC and Orange Mound Collaborative are also **celebrating the Neighborhood Signs** that can be seen around the perimeter of Orange Mound. The signs were designed by local graphic artist Kelly Brother and were paid for by a Neighborhood Demonstration Grant from the City of Memphis.

The signs depict symbols of the Orange Mound neighborhood, including the “H” from the Handy Theater sign, an Osage orange tree, a man with a hardhat to symbolize growth and improvement, a shotgun house and, of course, a Golden Wildcat.

The UrbanArt Commission was established in 1997 through the vision of Founding Chair Kristi Jernigan and through the collaborative efforts of the Memphis Arts Council and the Shelby County Government. The mission of the UAC is to create a dynamic, vibrant, nurturing community through art and design. The City of Memphis’s Public Art Program was passed by the City Council in March of 2002, and allocates one percent of the total general obligation bond amount included in the CIP budget for construction costs each fiscal year to be set aside for the development of artwork. For more information, contact Carissa Hussong at 901.525.0880.

#