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Area Artist's Second Cross-Country Tour Explores New Frontiers, Draws National and International Media Attention.

Subject: The Fall 2007 Itinerant Artist Project Tour (September 18-November 1)

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Being tailed for a day and a half by a cameraman from NBC's Today Show was not the most unexpected thing that happened to artist Jim Mott on his latest road trip. A few weeks earlier, in Missoula Montana, he'd received a speeding ticket, his first in 20,000 miles of art touring. When Mott asked the judge if he would accept art for the courthouse in place of the fine, the judge thought for a moment and said, "why not?" "Being abducted by aliens wouldn't have surprised me more," said Mott. "The judge's willingness to get into the spirit of the Project provided the highlight to an interesting but very demanding journey. And using one of my prints to pay off the ticket gave new meaning to the term 'fine art.' "

The Itinerant Artist Project, "exchanging art for hospitality across the US", began in 2000 with a 2 ½ month trip to the west coast and back. On tour, Mott stays with a series of hosts, mostly strangers, who trade 2-4 days' room and board for a painting done on location. The Project, which combines traditional landscape painting with performance and public outreach, is explained in detail on the Project website, www.jimmott.com.

This latest art road trip, from Seattle to Rochester, NY, was the 7th Itinerant Artist Project tour and Mott's first cross-country excursion since the initial 2000 tour. Driving a used car he bought online for the trip, Mott covered 5000 miles in about six weeks. He made 15 stops in 10 states – most of them new to the Project; got to know many new hosts and places along the way; and did 55 paintings (landscapes done in oil on small panels). He also tried bartering** for the first time, successfully trading his paintings, prints or greeting cards for commercial lodging, meals, museum admission, and – in what may be an unprecedented ruling – the speeding ticket.

The 2007 trip generated some of the Project's best stories and a lot of unexpected media attention, as well, including a feature article in the Christian Science Monitor (also posted on the ABC International website), an interview on Canadian CBC radio, and a day and a half of being filmed in action, along with a later interview, for the NBC Today Show. This was quite a change of pace for a painter who is more comfortable in the company of trees than in the spotlight.

>>>The resulting 4-minute "American Story" segment aired January 2, 2008. It can be viewed online at: <http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/22472628/> or by following links at www.jimmott.com.

Jim Mott currently resides in the Rochester, NY area. He plans to make a number of smaller art trips for 2008, with a greater focus on exhibits and public presentations, including a talk about his Project and the 2007 tour at Rochester's Memorial Art Gallery April 24, 2008.

**Technical Note: Bartering was not part of the original intention of the Project, which is more specifically about setting up an alternative micro-culture with a series of hosts, in order to integrate art production into other people's everyday lives while exploring the value and function of art in a gift economy. But moving beyond conventional rules and assumptions to get a glimpse of what else is possible – which happens with spontaneous bartering – is certainly in the spirit of the Project.