

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

David Williams, Communications Manager
david@bemiscenter.org; 402.341.7130

Omaha Mural Project Partners
Eclectic group behind Meg Saligman's *Fertile Ground*

WHAT: The Omaha Mural Project's *Fertile Ground*

WHO: Partners supporting the Bemis Center / Peter Kiewit Foundation Project

WHEN: In progress with a June, 2009 completion date

WHERE: Energy Systems Building, 13th and Webster Street

Omaha, NE (August 11, 2008) – One is an energy company that weaves a spider's web of subterranean pipelines to provide heating and cooling services to 70% of downtown buildings, including the likes of Creighton University and the Qwest Center. The other is a leader in digital surveillance solutions with clients in the military and law enforcement communities.

Neither would normally be among the usual suspects when one thinks of public art projects, but both are squarely in the middle of the Omaha Mural Project's *Fertile Ground*, the 22,000-square-foot mural by internationally acclaimed artist Meg Saligman that now looms above 13th and Webster Streets in NoDo.

The 70-foot tall, 328-foot long east wall of the Energy Systems building has become the canvas for the giant mural and Hawkeye Vision Inc. has installed a high definition, day/night video camera to chronicle progress on the effort that will be completed in June, 2009.

The serendipity of the idea that a strictly utilitarian building could become a boldly beautiful work of art is not lost on the people at Energy Systems.

"It almost never happens that someone comes to tell you that they want to enhance your property with no strings attached," Energy Systems senior vice president Dan Markham said with a chuckle. "And all we had to do was step back and allow them room to work so that our building could become the center of attention in a major civic project that will mean so much to the NoDo area and to the rest of Omaha. Energy Systems is proud to be the home of *Fertile Ground*."

Markham admits that he and others at Energy Systems greeted the seemingly odd idea with a healthy dose of skepticism. "But once we became familiar with the quality of Meg Saligman's other work around the country and once we considered the professionalism we knew we could expect from the Peter Kiewit Foundation and the Bemis Center, that skepticism just melted away."



The first section of scaffolding came down this week as work continues on *Fertile Ground* the Omaha Mural Project. Photo: Holly McAdams

Across the street from *Fertile Ground* is a nondescript pole topped by equipment that represents a very overt glimpse into an otherwise covert world. Don't look for Hawkeye Vision CEO Robert "Gus" Gustafson to be so chatty about his other clients in the hush-hush, brave new world of surveillance systems. "Our clients have serious problems on their minds, so it's been fun to work on this project because it is so different," he said. "The mural is just fabulous and we're happy to be a part of giving people a peek into all those ants, those artists scrambling around on the scaffolding."

Hawkeye Vision's involvement in the Omaha Mural Project also began with what must have seemed a rather strange inquiry. "Two artists just showed up in our conference room one day with this, well, sort of abnormal idea," he said when recalling the whimsy of it all. "When you stop to think about it though, all of our work is what you might call 'abnormal,' so it's cool to use all this left brain technology in such a right brain project."

A special web site has been launched for the Omaha Mural Project. Please visit www.bemiscenter.org for additional background on the project.

The Omaha Mural Project's artists, principals, partners and select characters depicted in "Fertile Ground" are available for media interviews by contacting David Williams at the Bemis Center - 341-7130 or david@bemiscenter.org.



Efrain Viveros adds a finishing touch to the mural Thursday afternoon. Photo: Chris Machian