



# Santa Fe Art Institute

For immediate release  
May 4, 2004

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Page: 1/2

## **SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE PRESENTS I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU, WORK FROM THE 2004-2005 RESIDENCY OF ADRAIN CHESSE**

**A photographic exhibition of individual portraits that reveals reactions to the phrase, "I have something to tell you" –often a preface to life-altering disclosures**

**Exhibition at SFAI  
June 2-17, 2005**

**Opening Reception and June First Thursdays Gallery Talk  
Thursday, June 2, 6-8 pm.**

**Panel Discussion on Identity and Ownership with Adrain Chesser, Tim Wride,  
Margaret Archuleta, Julia Bergen, and Nia Parry  
Saturday, June 4, 2-3 pm.**

Adrain Chesser was born in Okeechobee, Florida, raised to be a Pentecostal preacher, studying the bible, taking organ lessons and speaking in tongues. At the age of eighteen, he abandoned his strict upbringing, searching for a broader experience of life. A friend gave him a camera, another gave him an enlarger and dark room supplies. Under a stairwell, in a small closet, he taught himself how to make a photograph, beginning a life-long exploration into light and image.

An exhibition of the work produced during his artist's residency at Santa Fe Art Institute opens on Thursday, June 2, with a gallery talk by Chesser at 6pm, followed by a reception. Approximately fifty works in color will be shown.

Chesser's passion for photography is inextricably tied to an obsessive pursuit of the unknowable made known: "I have lied, cheated, and stolen so that I could feel the erotic rush of watching an image magically appear on what was a blank piece of paper." He has pursued and captured intense human emotion on film and paper, presenting it boldly and unabashedly.



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His photography reflects his grappling with childhood traumas that still resonate for him. "As events in my adult life brought to the fore my debilitating fear of abandonment, it occurred to me that it might be possible to overcome this paralyzing state by ritualistically photographing my friends," he explains. So began this new series of work.

Methodically, he invited friends to come to his studio to have an individual portrait taken, a simple head shot. They weren't given additional information and were photographed in front of curtains that hung in Chesser's childhood home. He created a formal process that, in his words, "proved to be transformative." At the beginning of each shoot, he would start by saying, "I have something to tell you." Then he revealed a disquieting secret about himself.

The resulting images reflect each sitter's reaction depending upon their own history of loss, illness, and death, creating a portrait of unguarded, unsettling honesty. As a collective, the body of work speaks to these universal experiences.

Chesser's color photographs are printed on glossy paper, producing a reflective surface that suggests the way in which "humans create facades to distract from what lies beneath". The fragile surfaces scratch easily, providing a potent metaphor for scars on the human body and psyche.

Santa Fe Art Institute's mission is to explore the intersections of art and society by using artistic imagination to delve into issues, expand discourse, and enhance understanding of the role of the arts in contemporary society. "I Have Something to Tell You" is a body of work made possible by the enriching residencies provided by SFAI with the intent of providing a space and time for artists to develop without constraint.

xxx

**Editor's Note: Adrain Chesser is available for interviews by calling SFAI at 424-5050.**