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Venice Arts marks 18th year with 'Coming of Age' fundraiser

Venice Arts will celebrate its 18th anniversary with a fundraiser at the William Turner Gallery at Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave. E1, Santa Monica, from 4 to 7 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 6.

With the theme, "Coming of Age," the celebration will highlight the organization's growth since its inception 18 years ago. The event will also offer a sneak peak at some of Venice Arts' upcoming plans and highlight the work and achievements of Venice Arts' current students, alumni and supporters, event organizers said.

Acclaimed singer-songwriter Jill Sobule will headline a live musical program.

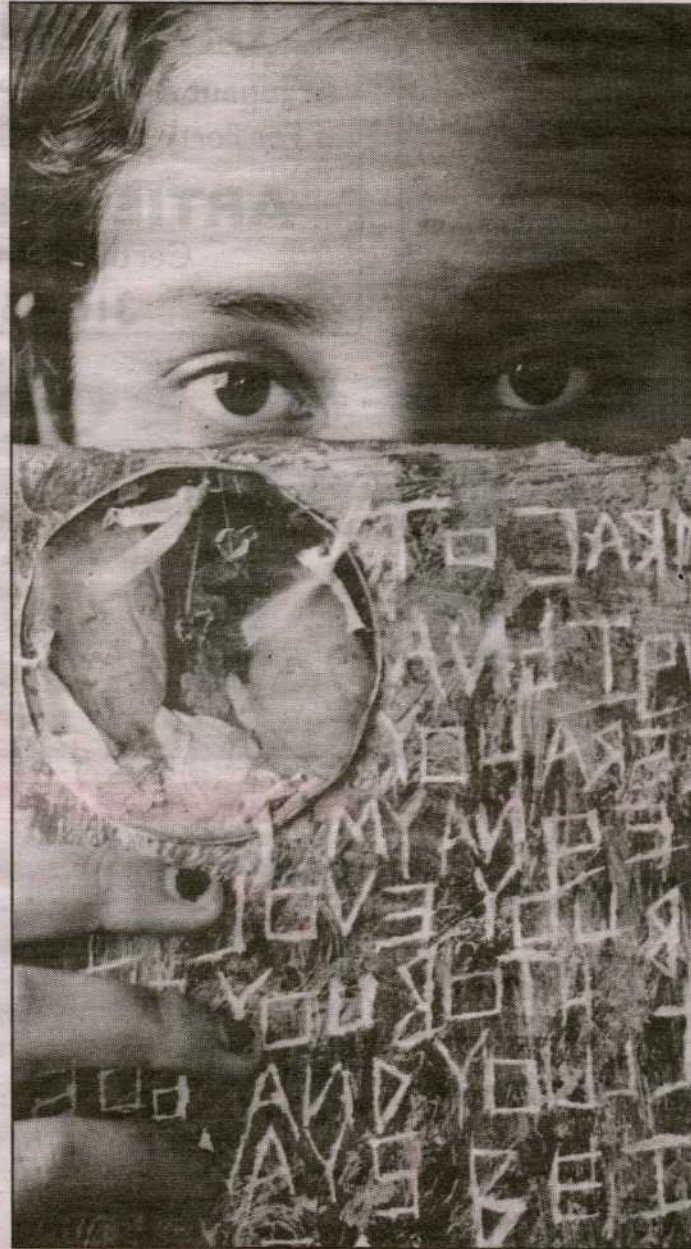
The celebration will showcase a "best of" auction of photographs taken over Venice Arts' 18 years; as well as the most recent project, *Shipping & Receiving*, a collaboration between youth photographers in Venice and youth on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota; and a small selection of work featuring Venice Arts' alumni.

A number of alumni are now adults who are working photographers or filmmakers, a Venice Arts spokesperson notes.

"I can't believe that it's been nearly 20 years; we are so proud of our students and the great work our mentors are doing here," says Dr. V. Joy Simmons, founding board vice president.

"Venice Arts has become a vital and essential organization for the city and all of Southern California. Our diverse students have had an impact both in their community and throughout the world."

Venice Arts will also honor several people who have been



VENICE ARTS will hold its 18th anniversary fundraiser celebrating works by alumni, including *Self-Portrait* (above) taken by Mayra Mejia at age 17. Mejia is now working on a master of arts degree at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

instrumental in ensuring the organization's success over the years, including Simmons, a physician, art collector and consultant; longtime volunteer photography artist-mentor Wynn Miller, and supporters Steven Oritt & The Selma Oritt Foundation.

"Few things bring as much-

satisfaction as watching a student empowered by the realization that they have a voice that matters and that they can share this voice, through the arts, with the outside world," Miller said.

Information, www.venicearts.org.