

Contact

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"I walk down this street everyday, but some things I never really noticed until I looked at it through a camera's lens."

Picturing Health

Photographs by Youth Across Southern & Central California

Venice, CA – (February 21, 2011) – **On March 12, 2011, from 5 to 8 pm, the Venice Arts Gallery** opens an exhibition of beautiful and compelling documentary photography by teenagers from eight Southern and Central California communities. Their images tell stories of challenge: teen pregnancy; foreclosures; gangs; uncollected trash; limited access to fresh foods and, in the Central Valley, clean drinking water. And of strength: women in Southern Kern who walk the parks to keep them safe; youth clubs and community centers that provide a safe place for kids after-school; a new health clinic in Coachella; and the farmer's market in Merced.

The 50 images in this exhibit represent only a small selection of hundreds of photographs from Venice Arts' project **Picturing Health** which, in 2009 and 2010, taught documentary photography to 80 teens living in impoverished neighborhoods of Southern and Central California including Boyle Heights, the Coachella Valley, the Figueroa Corridor, Long Beach, Merced, East Salinas, Santa Ana, and Southern Kern.

According to Giselle Macfarlane, the lead photographer on the project, "The photos that these kids took are really very powerful. They offer the viewer a way in; a way to see and feel both the beauty and the challenge in their lives. I have learned so much from working with these extraordinary kids." The youth participants, too, found that taking photographs offered them a new way to see and reflect on their lives and their communities. Cristian, age 17, of East Salinas said that through the project, "I learned the stories of people's lives. I noticed things about my own city that I never even noticed, went to locations I didn't know existed, and saw the power of photos."

Venice Arts created Picturing Health for The California Endowment's Building Healthy Communities initiative. This ten-year initiative seeks to make meaningful change in 14 low-income communities across California. Their goal is to support the development of communities where kids and youth are healthy, safe, and ready to learn by improving employment opportunities, education, housing, neighborhood safety, unhealthy environmental conditions, access to healthy foods, and more.

The Venice Arts Gallery is located at 1702 Lincoln Blvd. in Venice, CA; 310-392-0846. The exhibition continues through April 30th, and will be accompanied by a series of free public programs expanding on themes in the exhibition. On Saturday, April 9, at 7pm, Venice Arts will screen the Academy Award-nominated documentary *Food Inc.*, which exposes America's industrialized food system and its effect on our environment, health, economy, and worker's rights. On Wednesday, April 27th, at 7pm, we will host a screening of *Home Is Where You Find It*, a documentary short by Mozambican teenage Alcides Soares about finding home and family after losing both parents to AIDS, which offers a personal lens into this global health crisis. The film is part of Venice Arts' project *The House Is Small but the Welcome Is Big*.

About Venice Arts' Gallery and Public Programs

The **Venice Arts Gallery** primarily features the work of Documentary Photographers and high-caliber Participant-Produced Photography. Public Programs include workshops for adults and free lectures, conversations, and film screenings. The Venice Arts Gallery is a program of the non-profit **Venice Arts** that, since 1993, has received critical acclaim around the world for its innovative mentoring and educational programs for Los Angeles-area youth in Photography, Filmmaking, and Multimedia. Venice Arts also conducts Documentary Programs locally and internationally with adults and children; runs the Institute for Photographic Empowerment with USC; and consults with other organizations, foundations, and individuals on the development of similar programs. Venice Arts' newest partnership is a consulting contract in Hong Kong for the Robert H.N. Ho Family Foundation, for whom Venice Arts has developed a photography curriculum, is training their Teaching Artists, and will curate an exhibit of work by Hong Kong youth at The Hong Kong Cultural Art Center in July 2011.

Hi-Res images available upon request.

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