



Photo courtesy of Venice Arts

LIFE AS VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS: "Gordon in the Field" by Ursula Barker (above) and "Self Portrait" by Francesca Thomas (below) are two of the works featured. The exhibit will run through June 30. The opening reception will be held on Saturday from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Venice Gallery.

A picture tells a story

Venice Arts students get a chance to show their photo memoirs

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE The drama, the confusion, the heartbreak ... life as a teenage girl is anything but easy.

Five girls between the ages of 14 and 16 are getting the opportunity to tell the story of their lives through a collection of photographic works, on display at the Venice Arts Gallery this month.

The exhibit is the product of a year-long assignment in the advanced student photography class at Venice Arts, a nonprofit organization providing visual arts classes for low-income youth in the Los Angeles area.

Venice Arts will host an opening reception for the exhibit on Saturday.

Many of the students have been a part of the program for up to two to three years, but this was the first time the students were given their own cameras and assigned the task of leaving the classroom to document their everyday lives. This exhibit is a result of that innovative assignment.

"I was able to get a sense of what their lives were like outside of Venice Arts and see the ways they were able to express



SEE PHOTOS PAGE 12

Art exhibit tells students' stories

FROM PHOTOS PAGE 3

themselves creatively with photography and that seemed like an important element to them," said Joanne Kim, director of photography education and new media.

Though the program caters to low-income youth, the students in the photography class are diverse, a mixture of both low and middle income students.

The black-and-white photos featured in the exhibit will tell the story of Alex

Thomas and her sister Francesca Thomas, both of whom have been a part of the program for nearly three years.

The majority of Alex Thomas' photos are self-portraits or portraits of her friends. She had been accumulating the portraits over the years, deciding to submit them for the exhibit as her assignment. One of the pieces, titled "My Hand," shows the 14-year-old standing outside, the sun projected behind her, as she holds up her hand for the camera.

"When I'm taking pictures, I feel peaceful," Alex Thomas said. "That is what I reflect in my photography."

Los Angeles resident Elena Nardini, 16, submitted a piece titled "Halloween at School," showing a crowd of students, some wearing costumes.

Originally from Venice, Nardini has been taking the photography class with Venice Arts for almost five years.

"I just love being able to look at photos and being able to remember when they

were taken and everything," Nardini said.

The pieces in Nardini's portion of the exhibit reflect the different people in her life.

"It shows the diversity in my life," she said.

The exhibit will run through June 30. The opening reception will be held on Saturday from 5-7 p.m. at the Venice Gallery, 1809 Lincoln Blvd. in Venice.

melodyh@smdp.com