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SHIPPING & RECEIVING: PHOTOGRAPHS AND LETTERS BETWEEN
VENICE, CA AND DUPREE, SD OPENS AT VENICE ARTS GALLERY

(Los Angeles, CA – July 8, 2011) – On August 6, 2011, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm, Venice Arts Gallery will hold an Opening Reception for *Shipping & Receiving: Photographs and Letters between Venice, CA and Dupree, SD*. The exhibition highlights a photographic and personal storytelling exchange between youth in Venice and youth on the Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota and will feature texts and panoramic, collaborative double-exposure photographs, paired with over thirty black-and-white and color photographs taken by youth who have participated in the My Viewpoint Photography Program since its inception in 2005. This is the first public exhibition of their work.

Award-winning Photographer Emily Schiffer, founder of the My Viewpoint Photography Program, will accompany five of the students from the Cheyenne River Reservation to Los Angeles for the exhibition. "This exchange and exhibition has helped our students to view their artwork within a larger context. The students who participated in the exchange have been studying photography for years, but this project enabled them to really look at their lives, identify what is important to them, and turn that reflection into photographs," says Schiffer.

Twenty-two youth ages 12–21 in the Art Mentoring Program at Venice Arts in Venice, California, and the My Viewpoint Photography Program in Dupree, South Dakota, participated in this photographic and personal storytelling exchange over 2010 and 2011. Using 35mm cameras and black-and-white film, students shot photographs documenting their lives and surroundings, then shipped the film across the country to one another, to be exposed again in the cameras of their peers. This process—called double exposure—yields unpredictable and surprising results that emerge only after the film is processed: Horses on the Midwestern prairie run through fields of California roses. Snow-covered houses and winter-bare tree branches merge with ocean-drenched beaches. A young woman peers out of the window of her South Dakota home and sees the Venice Pier. In an age dominated by the instant gratification of digital photography, which gives up its secrets immediately, these images reveal theirs slowly, rewarding slower, more contemplative viewing.

Together with rolls and rolls of film, the students also sent letters sharing information about their lives and learning about those of their peers across the country. They found differences—one would not, for instance, expect to be able to lie on a main road in Los Angeles for any length of time without cars coming by, as one youth describes in Dupree. Yet despite—or perhaps because of—their disparate geographical locations, the youth were astonishingly open in their letters to one another. Writing back and forth, they bonded over the similarities they found in the fundamental challenges and aspirations in



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their lives: love for and conflicts with family, the desire to pursue education and find a career that is fulfilling, and a continual striving to grow as creative individuals.

Jessie Carlson, age 16, who has been participating in the My Viewpoint Program since she was 11, writes: "I'm really shy, and I don't talk a lot. So photography lets me talk without words." *Shipping & Receiving* offers a glimpse into the world that the youth created in the space between California and South Dakota, between shipping and receiving. The exhibition will be accompanied by a limited-edition, book publication, available for sale at the Opening Reception, featuring photographs and texts produced through the exchange. Proceeds will benefit Venice Arts and My Viewpoint.

The Venice Arts Gallery is located at 1702 Lincoln Blvd. in Venice, CA; 310-392-0846. The exhibition continues through September 30th and will be accompanied by a Public Program on August 10th, from 7:30 to 9:30pm. That evening, Venice Arts Gallery will present the premiere of the documentary film "We Win or We Die," which explores the first days of the Libyan uprising, and a talk with filmmaker Matthew Millan offering an on-the-ground perspective on the Libyan conflict garnered from his travels there in April and May. Millan is currently working on a feature-length documentary exploring the burgeoning nation that is emerging out of the ashes of war-torn Libya.

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 recently curated an exhibition of work by Hong Kong youth, which opened in June at the Hong Kong Cultural Art Centre.

Hi-Res images available upon request.

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