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CLAUDIA BERNARDI

SILENCE WAS HOSTILE AND ALMOST PERFECT

Exhibition highlighting civil war and human rights violations in El Salvador opens at 40 Acres Art Gallery.

The 40 Acres Art Gallery is pleased to present the exhibition, *Claudia Bernardi: Silence was Hostile and Almost Perfect*, an artistic exploration of traumas suffered by those who survived civil war and human rights violations in countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Ethiopia. *Claudia Bernardi: Silence was Hostile and Almost Perfect* was curated by Crista Cloutier, and includes the internationally exhibited installation, *Murmillos/Whispers*. Additionally, the exhibit will showcase the fruits of Claudia's labor in El Salvador – student work completed by youth in Perquin this summer. The exhibit will be on display from October 16 – December 30, 2007.

Silence was Hostile and Almost Perfect, a mini-retrospective of Ms. Bernardi's work, is her first U.S. show in many years after having been honored by the World Peace Center in Hiroshima with a one-woman show in 1995. More importantly, Claudia's story will come to our students at Sacramento High School. For three months Claudia will be an artist-in-residence at Sac High, showing students how to mix art, education and human rights activism by way of her own example. She will be working with art, history, and journalism students on a multi-faceted project that will combine art, history and documentation into a final product, which will be presented as a call to action to government officials. The students will learn about the horrors and history of El Salvador, and understand the relationship to causes and personal histories here in Oak Park.

Claudia Bernardi was born in Argentina in 1955 and was always close to her younger sister Patricia. While other children played games, the two girls entertained themselves by drawing for hours at a time. Orphaned at the age of 16, she and Patricia were drawn together even more tightly and Claudia continued to immerse herself in creating art. In 1973, Claudia enrolled as an art student at the National School of Fine Arts (Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, Prilidiano Pueyrredon) in Buenos Aires. At the same time, Ms. Bernardi became a community activist as the political world in Buenos Aires came to life. In 1979, after a military junta took over Argentina's government, Claudia fled the country citing the "uncertainties of life." She eventually came to the United States where she studied art at UC Berkeley.

In 1984, in response to the tragedy of Argentina's *Desaparecidos*, Claudia's sister, Patricia Bernardi helped to found the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (AFAT). AFAT is dedicated to investigating human rights violations against civilian populations uncovering and identifying remains of atrocity victims and documenting the violence that has taken place. One excavation changed Claudia's life forever. In 1992, Claudia went to El Mozote, El Salvador, eleven years after a massacre wiped out 1,000 people. Claudia and AFAT members recovered the remains of 143 people, 136 of whom were children under the age of twelve. Claudia once noted in her diary, "After El Mozote, I will be a different Claudia."

In 2005, Claudia opened the School of Art and Open Studio of Perquin, located less than five miles from El Mozote. There she discovered that though the participants had no previous experience with art, they were nonetheless able to grasp the tools of self-expression and this new skill became a mode of communication between people who, not so very long ago, were at war with each other.

40 Acres Art Gallery is also proud to display the art of students from Perquin in our Young At Art Gallery.

Opening Reception & Educational Programming

40 Acres will host several events throughout the fall to celebrate this very special exhibition.

The opening artist reception will occur at the 40 Acres Art Gallery, located at 3428 3rd Avenue in Oak Park, on ***Saturday, October 13th from 5pm -8pm.*** Sacramento High School's 34th Street Dance Company will also debut a special dance performance in response to *Murmillos/Whispers*.

40 Acres will also host to several other programming events, beginning with a special discussion entitled ***What Happened at El Mozote? A Conversation with Claudia Bernardi and New Yorker journalist Mark Danner*** on Saturday, November 17th, 2pm. This event will take place at the Guild Theater located at 2828 35th Street in Oak Park. This event is free and open to the public.

Other Programming:

Saturday, November 3rd, 1pm

Dance! Learn about Central America through dance with the Sacramento Cultural Arts Center 6520 44th Street, Suite 308, Sacramento, CA 95823, \$10.00
*Advanced registration required. Call (916) 456-5080

Friday, December 7th, 7pm

A Fundraiser for Walls of Hope, featuring special live music by Lichi Fuentes. Tickets can be purchased in advanced at 40 Acres. 40 Acres Art Gallery, \$25.00

Saturday, December 1st, 2pm

War and Social Injustice in Central America: A Panel Discussion, moderated by Xóchitl Arellano and including the artist, historians, journalists and curators.

Guild Theater, Free

Educational programming supported in part by Bank of America, St. HOPE, the LEF Foundation, the California Arts Council, Target and the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, with a partnership with Sacramento State's Community Engagement Center, La Raza Galeria Posada and the Sacramento Cultural Arts Center.

The 40 Acres Art Gallery is dedicated to celebrating the rich multi-cultural heritage existing in Sacramento's community of Oak Park, and seeks to educate and promote, exhibit and collect art that is a reflection of this diversity. 40 Acres is a part of St. HOPE, founded 1989 by NBA all-star and Oak Park native Kevin Johnson as a means to bringing revitalization to this inner-city Sacramento community. The 40 Acres Art Gallery was founded in 2002 as a way to provide museum-level arts enrichment opportunities for Sacramento.

40 Acres Art Gallery is located at the corner of 35th Street and Broadway in Oak Park, Sacramento (3428 3rd Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95817.) Gallery hours are Tuesday – Friday, 12pm – 6pm and Saturday, 10am – 5pm. For more information, contact 916-456-5080 or www.40acresartgallery.org.

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