



DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS
City of Los Angeles

****MEDIA ALERT****

**L.A.'s VIBRANT ARTS DISTRICT REVEALED IN NEW BOOK
"MUSE-ings: Snapshots of the Arts District, Downtown Los Angeles"**

*Book Launch Event on Jan. 18;
Exhibit of Photographs and Paintings Inspired by the Images, Jan. 18 – Feb. 8
at Art Share L.A., 801 E. 4th Place at Hewitt St., Downtown Los Angeles*

WHAT: A celebration of one of Los Angeles' most popular neighborhoods, the Downtown Arts District, is revealed through a new book of photography by Melissa Richardson Banks, "MUSE-ings: Snapshots of the Arts District, Downtown Los Angeles." The book is launched through an exhibition featuring Richardson Banks' photographs accompanied by paintings (oil, acrylic, aerosol, watercolor), drawings, mixed media, neon and sculptural installations by over 40 artists who reinterpreted her images using their own unique styles.

Captured and shared daily through her "Downtown Muse" blog and social media, the photographs by Richardson Banks reveal an insider's view of the Arts District, which was transformed in the 1980s by artists who created studios in former industrial warehouses and is now in the midst of yet another major renaissance.

Richardson Banks' point of view in her photos chronicling this extraordinary community is more like someone wanting to remember a loved one, rather than taking tourist shots or covering an event. Images include a pile of colorfully painted bricks covered in graffiti from a demolished industrial building, luscious blossoms against stark concrete, bold skies crisscrossed by power lines, serpentine wire caressing iron fences, and sunlight washing over historic bridges. These are among the many images that evoke the sense of a place more pastoral or exotic than what one expects to find in the center of the nation's second largest metropolis.

WHO: **Collector Cheech Marin will be at the exhibit opening** plus artists Jari "Werc" Alvarez, A.S. Ashley, Qathryn Brehm, Jesse Burgos, Gary Callahan, Diego Cardoso, Susie Chang, Jaime Colindres, Kikki Eder, Margaret Garcia, Clemente Garcia Lassaulx, Tom Garner, Kristopher Gee, Yolanda Gonzalez, Jacinto Guevara, Christian Hernandez, Javi Herrera, Miriam Jackson, Jeremy Thomas Kunkel, George Labrada, Bonnie Lambert, Lauren Langford, Leba, Lili Lakich, Ted Lychkoff, Ted Meyer, Colette Miller, Patricia R. Mitchell, Alberto Miyares, Birgitte Moos, J.W. Pippen, Wenceslao Quiroz, Melissa Richardson Banks, Patti Richardson, Rick Robinson, Sandy Rodriguez, Alex Schaefer, SEK, ShadowMonsterBear, Roderick Smith, Anna Stump, Bob Ujszaszi, Jerico Woggon, Jaime "Germs" Zacarias

WHEN: **Saturday, January 18 @ 7–11 p.m.** Exhibit opening and book launch event
Saturday, February 8 @ 7–11 p.m. Closing reception and book signing event

WHERE: **Art Share L.A. @ 801 E. 4th Place, Los Angeles, 90013;** www.artsharela.org
Gallery Hours: Wednesday through Friday 11 a.m to 2 p.m. Saturday 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

INFO: www.downtownmuse.com

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Praise for “MUSE-ings: Snapshots of the Arts District, Downtown Los Angeles” by Melissa Richardson Banks, aka Downtown Muse:

Melissa Richardson Banks is our secret eyes, finding the secret light that illuminates the secrets of an ever-changing neighborhood and bringing them out into plain sight so that they are secrets no more. ~ Cheech Marin, collector, art advocate and entertainer

Melissa Richardson Banks offers a poignant long-form photo-essay chronicling the changing contours of a singular place and time. Her taste for saturated color is met by the neighborhood's organic proliferation of street art and industrial palimpsests. Her instinct for painterly detail appreciates the way rail tracks or light posts recede just so, the way the sun paints the sky and myriad reflections paint each other, and the peculiar architectural romance of the moribund manufacturing sector. In the tradition of classic street-photographers like Eugène Atget and Henri Cartier-Bresson, her images capture a specific sense of place that looks like poetry, but does the job of documentary. Her unerring eye for the rhythms of her environment approaches the power of, if not nature exactly, then the thing that people like us chooses instead of nature. ~ Shana Nys Dambrot - art critic, Whitehot Magazine

Great artists have flocked to Tumblr to share their work for the digital world to see. Unfortunately, those creative minds usually forget about Tumblr within a few weeks after creating it. That's why Melissa Richardson Banks' online anthology of downtown Los Angeles' Art District, Downtown Muse, is such a treat. Richardson Banks shares her “fly-on-the-wall” view of street scenes and local stories a couple times a day. Every day. And if you want to get the offline experience of her Tumblr, she offers free neighborhood tours weekly. ~ Judge, 2013 LA Weekly Web Awards

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