



## Venice Arts Gallery Presents “Venice Family Dog: Photographs by Susan Rennie”

LOS ANGELES, CA – (AUGUST 9, 2012)

Opening Reception: Saturday, Aug. 25, 5–8pm  
Exhibition Dates: Aug. 25–Sept. 22, 2012

Venice Arts Gallery is pleased to present “Venice Family Dog,” an exhibition of over 50 new portraits by thirty-six-year Venice resident and long-time Venice Arts supporter Susan Rennie. Venice families, as well as members of the public (and their dogs) are invited to celebrate with us during the opening reception on August 25th, from 5 to 8pm. The exhibition will be on view through September 22nd.



Taking the Venice community as her subject matter, Rennie captures the uniqueness and variety of this area through the specificity of the family portrait. Through her photographs, Rennie strives to represent all the critical elements of Venice’s demography, although she admits that the selection of families, limited to a few dozen households from among twenty-seven thousand has, by necessity, been subjective. The dogs here also represent just a fraction of dogdom’s kaleidoscope—thirty breeds, from teacup Chihuahua to Newfoundland, as well as a host of marvelous dogs of assorted parentage.

For Rennie, the abounding variety of dogs in Venice become reflective of the various familial structures that make up our community. As Rennie says, “Venice has not been nicknamed Dogtown for nothing. That moniker may have originated with early skateboarders, but it is also a valid descriptor of the variegated dogs that populate Venice, and who, I have noticed over the years, reflect the rich mosaic of its human inhabitants. For Venice is surely one of the most diverse, heterogeneous communities in a nation that prizes its pluralism: people who are rich and poor; artsy, funky, glitzy; brown, white, black; bourgeois and homeless; young and old; the famous living among the

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IMAGE CREDITS, TOP TO BOTTOM:  
All photographs by Susan Rennie

Page 1: Elvis  
Willie and Peanut

Page 2: Pinky  
Holly and Raku

Page 3: Lucas  
Maximus

ordinary; artists and visionaries alongside mow and blow gardeners and political activists.”

The project grew out of Rennie's walks through the neighborhood with her own dog: “As I have walked my dog around Venice, encountering other dogs and their companions, and as I have socialized with Venetian friends and neighbors and their dogs, I flashed on a particular dimension of Venice's uniqueness: family structure—representing almost every flavor on the spectrum of domestic arrangement. Since dogs are integral family members, devoted to their people as their people are devoted to them, I undertook to portray the dimensions of family variety with the dog as the lynchpin.”

This will be Rennie's third exhibition at the Venice Arts Gallery. Previous exhibitions include “The Gates of Venice” (2007) and “The Dogs of Venice” (2008). In addition to being a photographer, Rennie is also an avid collector of photography. She has donated beautiful photographs by sought-after contemporary photographers including Richard Misrach, John Humble, and Rubén Ortiz Torres from her collection to Venice Arts' Annual Gala. Venice Arts' 2012 Gala, celebrating our 19th Anniversary, will take place on November 3, 2012. For tickets and sponsorship information, visit: [www.venicearts.org](http://www.venicearts.org).

### About the Artist

Susan began taking photographs in the late sixties during her doctoral candidacy at Columbia University. In 1970 her photographs of museum goers were used to illustrate the Museum of Modern Art Annual Report. The next year she studied with Lisette Model, a great photographer who mentored Diane Arbus. Rennie was involved with the Los Angeles Woman's Building in the 1970s and her perspectives on the Woman's Building's role in Los Angeles' history was featured in Otis College of Art and Design's 2011 Pacific Standard Time exhibition “Doin' It in Public: Feminism and Art at the Woman's Building” (1973–1991). Photography was much more attractive to her than political philosophy, but life intervened with the advent of the Women's Movement, taking her in a different direction than art. After a long career as an academic and women's health activist, she retired in 2005, and resumed her true avocation—photography. Having lived in Venice since 1976, she decided to take this historic, idiosyncratic community as a subject for her photography.

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### **About Venice Arts**

Venice Arts runs education and mentoring programs in documentary photography, filmmaking, and multimedia primarily targeting Los Angeles area low-income youth. Venice Arts also implements regional, statewide, and international projects with both adults and children; runs the Institute for Photographic Empowerment, a collaboration with the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism; presents exhibitions, public programs, and workshops for adults centered around documentary photography and film at the Venice Arts Gallery; and consults on media arts, visual storytelling, and arts education with organizations and groups locally and internationally.

### **Location & Hours**

Venice Arts Gallery  
1702 Lincoln Blvd., Venice CA 90291  
310.392.0846

Monday–Friday, 10am–6pm & by appointment  
Gallery & Public Programs are free and open to the public.

