

ROY AND EDNA DISNEY/CALARTS THEATER IN WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

CALARTS DOWNTOWN CENTER FOR INNOVATIVE VISUAL, PERFORMING AND MEDIA ARTS

**NEWS RELEASE*****FACING THE MUSIC*****Guest Curator Allan Sekula****April 14, 2005 – May 29, 2005****Opening Reception: Wednesday, April 13, 2005, 6 - 9 pm**

Image Caption: James Baker, *Untitled*, 2004  
Gallery at REDCAT (the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater)

*FACING THE MUSIC*, a group exhibition of photography, video, and multi-media installation documenting the transformation of downtown Los Angeles will be presented at California Institute of the Arts' (CalArts) Gallery at REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater).

Conceived in 1998 as a long-term collaborative project, *FACING THE MUSIC* is an

investigation of the urban fabric of downtown Los Angeles through the expansion of its “cultural corridor” with the construction of Frank O. Gehry’s Walt Disney Concert Hall.

From the 1930s to the early 1960s, the densely populated vertical neighborhoods of Bunker Hill were a major focus of social realism in literature and the arts, ranging from the fiction of John Fante to the paintings of Millard Sheets, the photographs of Leonard Nadel, and the films of Kent McKenzie. Beginning in the 1960s, Bunker Hill was cleared of human habitation and slowly reclaimed as the city’s would-be Acropolis.

Looking for social relations in the wake of the massive social eviction of the 1960s, *FACING THE MUSIC* proposes a variety of “post-Acropolypitic” social-realist approaches to research. The building of Disney Hall revived in an emblematic way the tropes of heroic social labor, already appreciatively echoed in a number of celebratory documentary projects. *Facing the Music* takes a cooler, more circumspect approach.

For the artists, the exhibition poses the question: what is the meaning and impact of city planning that locates a concert hall across from criminal courts, and then proposes an adjacent commercial development containing a House of Blues?

Over the past five years, five artists, James Baker, Anthony Hernandez, Karin-Apollonia Mueller, Allan Sekula and Billy Woodberry, have worked outward from the corner of First Street and Grand Avenue, where the main entrance of the Concert Hall stands. This urban street corner has become an intersection of the new axis of culture and spirituality--marked by the presence of Arata Isozaki’s designed Museum of Contemporary Art, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion and the Music Center complex, and José Rafael Moneo’s Our Lady of Angels Cathedral--and the old axis of the city’s civic and media center--*The Los Angeles Times*, the County Courthouse, and City Hall.

The lines drawn by this exhibition stretches from the new but dormant Belmont High School complex to the recently demolished housing project at Aliso Village, two sites well beyond the reach and remedy of downtown boosterism. At the same time, the exhibition provides a rigorous look at the early reception, construction and public use of the Walt Disney Concert Hall to investigate the relationship between cultural spaces, architecture, and its affect on urban development.

Conceived by internationally acclaimed artist and CalArts faculty member Allan Sekula, the exhibition will include more than 30 large-scale color photographs by Hernandez and Mueller, a slide project by Sekula, a computer installation by Baker, and a single channel video by Woodberry. In addition, the exhibition will include texts, maps, diagrams and historic photographs of Disney Hall’s Bunker Hill site.

The artists in *FACING THE MUSIC* have long established practices exploring the urban and social landscapes of Southern California. In 1973, Sekula (b. 1951), who has taught at CalArts since 1985, chronicled unemployment in the region’s now largely defunct aircraft industry in a photographic series titled *Aerospace Folktales*. During the 1970’s, Hernandez (b. 1947) documented Beverly Hills and Broadway in downtown Los Angeles. Independent filmmaker and CalArts faculty member Woodberry depicted the social and familial drama of South Central Los Angeles in his neo-realist film *Bless Their*

*Little Hearts* (1984). Baker and Mueller (b. 1963) are newer arrivals. Baker has applied his background in cultural geography to explore Southern California's outer suburbs, rural prisons and the home-building industry while Mueller's landscape photography depicts the topography of Los Angeles and its environs with an uncanny attention to ecological displacement. All five artists have exhibited widely in national and international institutions.

A series of lectures and public discussions will coincide with the exhibition.

As a continuation of the project, a catalogue with additional images and a text by Sekula will be published after the run of the exhibition at REDCAT.

Gallery hours: noon to 6pm or curtain, closed Mondays

Admission to the gallery is always free

Visit [www.redcat.org](http://www.redcat.org) or call +1.213.237.2800 for more information

REDCAT  
631 West 2nd Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012 USA