

BEDFORD GALLERY PRESENTS
Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists
July 8 – September 17, 2023
Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek

WALNUT CREEK, CA (23 May 2023) — **Bedford Gallery** presents works by some of the world's most accomplished blind photographers with the exhibition ***Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists***, exploring the nature of seeing. With photography as their medium, the 13 featured artists navigate with other senses to visualize and represent the space around them. Blind photographers are said to operate at the heart of the medium, sometimes called the zero point of photography, occupying image as idea, idea as image. ***Sight Unseen*** will be on view **July 8 through September 17, 2023**, from 12:00pm-5:00pm, Wednesday through Sunday at **Bedford Gallery** inside **Leshner Center for the Arts**, 1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek. For more information or to purchase pay-what-you-can* tickets, visit www.bedfordgallery.org. Pay-what-you-can- tickets for ***Sight Unseen*** are available for purchase online or at the door. *Bedford Gallery will be open for special hours on Saturday, July 8, 2023, kicking off with a member preview, followed by a public opening reception (\$5 for non-members) – see hours below. *As of July 1, Bedford Gallery is moving to a pay-what-you-can model to remove financial barriers for entry to the gallery.*

The artists in this exhibition span a wide spectrum of sight impairment; most are completely blind, while others are legally blind, but all perceive an attenuated image of the physical world in varying degrees. Photographer Henry Butler, who was born blind, uses audio cues to capture the vibrant street life and characters in his hometown of New Orleans. A world-class musician and photographer since 1984, Butler applies the same ideas inherent in his music to his photography: be open, embrace variety, and experiment relentlessly.

A majority of the exhibition's artists operate from memories of the sighted world, having lost their vision from disease or tragedy, including Ralph Baker, Rosita McKenzie, Kurt Weston, and Alice Wingwall. Evgen Baycar and Pete Eckert often shoot at night to communicate what they

BEDFORD GALLERY PRESENTS “SIGHT UNSEEN: PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLIND ARTISTS”

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see in their minds, while Netherlands-based photographer Alex De Jong embraces assistive technologies to create his art, using software that transforms cell phone images into verbal reports that describe composition, structure, design and motion. Gerardo Nigenda, who died in 2010, collaborated with a Braille writer to punch descriptive texts directly into his photographs, making them accessible to both blind and sighted people.

For other photographers, limited sight provides a bridge between two worlds. Annie Hesse, a relentless world traveler, relies on her camera as her constant companion on her journeys through Africa, the Americas, Europe, and Asia, making photographs based on hunch, conjecture, and curiosity. Unlikely discoveries, uncanny geometric balances, and small details deliberately seen comprise the photographs of now deceased photographer Michael Richard, all captured in an intense four-year burst after losing most of his vision in a surgical accident. Bruce Hall, who retains very limited sight, treats his camera and other technological devices as extensions of his own body, using them to construct his world. Seeing With Photography Collective, “a collaboration between visually impaired and sighted photographers,” employs light within a dark room setting to paint their subjects with the shutter open, resulting in blurred, luminous distortions, and glowing forms.

Sight Unseen seeks to bring the inner visions of these artists into the seeing world, revealing a visually rich and emotionally complex blend of the physical and conceptual worlds. Curated by Douglas McCulloh and organized by Curatorial Exhibitions, the exhibition features over 100 photographs by the 13 participating artists.

This exhibition is sponsored by Diablo Regional Arts Association and Leshner Foundation.

Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists has been curated by Douglas McCulloh and originated by UCR/California Museum of Photography, an affiliate institution of ARTSblock, the University of California, Riverside, and toured by Curatorial Assistance Traveling Exhibitions, Pasadena, California.

About Bedford Gallery

Bedford Gallery (BG) exhibits the work of modern and contemporary artists. The gallery is dedicated to providing the public with opportunities to learn about visual arts through public

BEDFORD GALLERY PRESENTS “SIGHT UNSEEN: PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLIND ARTISTS”
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programs that are varied, accessible, challenging, and educational. Its mission is to provide exhibitions and other programs that both reflect and engage the diverse audiences of the entire Contra Costa County region. With 3,500 square feet of exhibition space, Bedford Gallery is the largest municipally operated visual arts facility between the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento.

About the Leshar Center for the Arts

Leshar Center for the Arts is the premier arts venue in Central Contra Costa County. Located in the heart of downtown Walnut Creek, the center offers three separate theatres and Bedford Gallery, a fine art gallery, presenting the best of theater, ballet, comedy, and visual art.

For Calendar Editors:

WHAT: **Bedford Gallery** presents works by some of the world’s most accomplished blind photographers with the exhibition *Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists*, exploring the nature of seeing. The featured artists span a wide spectrum of sight impairment; most are completely blind, while others are legally blind, but all perceive an attenuated image of the physical world in varying degrees. All of the artists, with photography as their medium, navigate with other senses to visualize and represent the space around them. Blind photographers are said to operate at the heart of the medium, sometimes called the zero point of photography, occupying image as idea, idea as image. *Sight Unseen* seeks to bring the inner visions of the featured artists into the seeing world, revealing a visually rich and emotionally complex blending of the physical and conceptual worlds. Curated by Douglas McCulloh, the exhibition features over 100 photographs by 13 participating artists.

WHERE: **Bedford Gallery at Leshar Center for the Arts**
1601 Civic Dr, Walnut Creek

WHEN: **July 8: Special hours for opening day**
July 9 – September 17, 2023: 12:00pm-5:00pm, Wednesdays through Sundays

Opening Day: Saturday, July 8, 2023

Member and press preview 11:00am–12:00pm

Public reception: 12:00pm–2:00pm

Gallery open to the public: 2:00pm–5:00pm

INFO: Bedford Gallery members enjoy free gallery admission (plus one guest) to all exhibitions and opening receptions for a year. For more information or to become a member, the public may call (925) 295-1417 or visit www.bedfordgallery.org/memberships/levels.

BEDFORD GALLERY PRESENTS “SIGHT UNSEEN: PHOTOGRAPHY BY BLIND ARTISTS”

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TICKETS: As of July 1, Bedford Gallery is moving to a pay-what-you-can model to remove financial barriers for entry to the gallery. The Member Preview on July 8 is FREE for members. Admission to the public opening reception is \$5 for non-members, and free for children 12 and under.

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PRESS: Contact Sydney Albin Carla Befera & Co.
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PHOTOS: Media may download high-res photos at:
<https://cbpr.co/press/sightunseen/>