

'A Jamaica, Queens Thing': Rap and the Crack Era in South Jamaica

JAMAICA, N.Y. – Apr. 9 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – The Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (JCAL) is pleased to present “A Jamaica, Queens Thing”: Rap and the Crack Era in South Jamaica, organized by guest curator Herb Tam. The opening artist reception takes place Saturday, April 14, 2007, 4 – 7 pm.

In the mid 80s, crack cocaine hit the streets of America and began to devastate the landscape of inner-city communities like South Jamaica, Queens, the neighborhood adjacent to downtown Jamaica. Incorporating art with historical material, this exhibition reflects on the trauma of the crack epidemic (1986-90) and its deep influence on the course of rap music.

Thus, the exhibition title references Queens native and rapper Nas' song, “Memory Lane,” from the CD entitled *Illmatic*. The art works on exhibition act as characterizations of certain elements in the narrative of South Jamaica during that period. Specifically, the works deal with police authority, hip hop culture, drug addiction and suburban desire.

Karlos Carcamo's neon sculpture *White Line – Kosuth Remix for Grandmaster Flash* re-constructs minimalism into a cold symbol of the lure of drugs. Corey D'Augustine shows *1/2 Car*, an unwanted car split down the middle of its long side with light effects illuminating it from underneath. Jocelin Donahue presents T-shirts that glorify some of rap's most memorable lines about crack and hostility and drawings of key characters from South Jamaica's crack era.

Joshua Abram Howard shows a new sculpture of the skeletal armature of a sports utility vehicle with “tricked out” tire rims. The piece speaks of the ultimate emptiness and wastefulness of the crack game, in spite of the fast lifestyle and shimmering materialistic gains it produced. Daragh Reeves' video *Night Moves* is a compilation of passing cars in the night appropriated from films, setting a lonely, ominous tone. He will also show a selection of ink drawings that hint at the narrative arch of South Jamaica's drug dealers.

Greg Santos presents dueling mixtapes featuring songs culled from past and recent rap rivalries, including the one between South Jamaica's 50 Cent and Hollis' Ja Rule. A selection of Sol'Sax's sculptural and video work references hip hop culture and its inseparability from the politics of street life, personal spirituality and global history. Xaviera Simmons will be showing photographs taken in Southern California that interpret suburban desire, a powerful force in the development of South Jamaica. Nick Stillman's columns of photographed, computer graphic ‘paintings’ coated with lip gloss mirror the suffocating design of housing projects and the swift degradation of surface enticement.

Also on view will be a collection of rap music that grew out of the crack era, a timeline tracking the key events of that period in South Jamaica, newspaper articles, and other historical paraphernalia.

Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning is located at 161-04 Jamaica Avenue, Jamaica, NY 11432. For more information and directions, call 718-657-7400 ext 123 or visit www.jcal.org.

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Note: Title "A Jamaica, Queens Thing" is taken from "Memory Lane," by Nas; CD Illmatic.

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