

Los Caminos

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Pruitt-Igoe Bee Sanctuary: Continuing the Conversation

July 23 – August 13, 2011

Opening Reception: Saturday, July 23rd, 7–10 pm

Artist's Talk: Saturday, August 13th, 2pm

SAINT LOUIS: Los Caminos is proud to present the *Pruitt-Igoe Bee Sanctuary: Continuing the Conversation*, artist Juan William Chávez's public proposal for the overgrown lot where the Pruitt-Igoe housing project once stood in St. Louis, Missouri. Featuring a series of photographs and a Super 8 film, the exhibition encourages public dialogue about the creative uses and possibilities of urban abandonment.

Following the 1970's demolition of the 33 buildings that comprised Pruitt-Igoe, the remaining lot of several acres has transformed into an urban forest. Only blocks from the city center, the still unoccupied land has come to represent both the scarred past and creative potential that St. Louis continues to embody. Chávez confronts the city's history and addresses divisive community issues in his vision to transform the land into a public park. In the *Pruitt-Igoe Bee Sanctuary*, Chávez proposes a home for a beekeeping school, interweaving the metaphorical and practical significance of bees with that of our city. Like St. Louis' population, honey bees are also on the decline. However, in contrast to the unnatural living conditions in the Pruitt-Igoe housing development, bees provide a model for community harmony and participation.

Chávez is an artist and cultural activist whose studio practice focuses on the potential of space by developing creative initiatives that address community and cultural issues. He has exhibited at venues such as Art in General, New York; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; and the Van Abbenmuseum in Eindhoven, Netherlands. In 2006 Chávez founded Boots Contemporary Art Space. In 2010, Chávez curated *Urban Expression: Theaster Gates* for the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts. This year he was awarded the Missouri Arts Award for Individual Artist and was the recipient of the Art Matters Grant.