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FLOODWALL Opens at Louisiana State Museum

*A Multi-dimensional Art Installation of Flood-ravaged Belongings
Tell the Story of the New Orleans Diaspora*

**At the Louisiana State Museum – Baton Rouge
July 13 through October 13, 2007**

BATON ROUGE, LA - *Floodwall*, a multi-media, site specific art installation composed of more than 350 household drawers salvaged from trash heaps found in the neighborhoods flooded by Katrina, will be on exhibit at the Louisiana State Museum in Baton Rouge. On display July 13th through October 13th, *Floodwall* coincides with the 2nd anniversary of Katrina to pay homage to the people living in the Parishes where the effort to rebuild continues and to honor their indelible spirit and love for Louisiana. The opening reception, Friday, July 13, 2007, 6:00-9:00 p.m. is *free* and open to the public.

Floodwall, created by New Orleans artist Jana Napoli, preserves a small part of what the levees could not. Moved to action by the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, Ms. Napoli collected hundreds of drawers from the flooded and abandoned neighborhoods in the days and months that followed. In this installation, created in partnership with Rondell Crier and Whirlwind Creative, the drawers are mounted as a massive wall standing 8 feet tall and stretching 96 feet long. Embedded in the drawers are audio devices that project the voices of their former drawer owners whose stories replace what the drawers once held. Their words reminisce and mourn:

"I thought New Orleans would be a good place to go for rain and history, and it was." "Having to throw your furniture out in front of your house -- your life is sort of taken from you and sort of dumped out in your front yard." "New Orleans was here before America was here and we are a part of America."

"**Floodwall** is a journey through loss and transformation. It explores the human connection to culture and community expressed through the everyday objects of people," said Jed Horne, author of the acclaimed *Breach of Faith*. "Through found objects and a multi-media interpretive presentation, **Floodwall** speaks of what was lost to Katrina and what remains of New Orleans."

Floodwall www.floodwall.org first came to life in the fall of 2005 when New Orleans artist Jana Napoli began gathering furniture junked after the floodwaters of Katrina had receded. Ms. Napoli saw this human essence of the disaster, dampened but not dead, reflected in piles of curbside-discarded materials. Sweeping across the city Ms. Napoli collected dresser drawers from the heaps of ravaged belongings in front of flooded homes. In a time of death, destruction, and Diaspora, the artist found no shortage of needs to mourn and memorialize. "We were driven to create a wailing wall that builds intimate and homely detritus from a world destroyed into a wrenching cry of grief," said Ms. Napoli. "This emotional endeavor quickly grew into a sculptural and historical work allowing the people of New Orleans to tell their own story about what they value and why."

"**Floodwall** is a poignant and compelling narration of what happened to Gulf Coast families as a result of the devastating hurricanes," said Lt. Governor Landrieu. "Every drawer in the exhibit represents a life that was lost or forever changed. We are honored to host the **Floodwall** exhibit in Baton Rouge."

The **Floodwall** exhibit is being presented in partnership with the World Cultural Economic Forum, a series of cultural events planned annually to commemorate the anniversaries of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Lt. Governor Landrieu launched the Forum to demonstrate the value of the cultural economy and shine the light on Louisiana's unique and authentic culture to national and international visitors.

Whirlwind Creative produced the premier exhibition of **Floodwall** in New York City, which opened in January 2007 at the World Financial Center Liberty Street Bridge. This site specific installation was viewed by an audience of nearly one million people and received critical praise in the *New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Wall Street Journal*. Whirlwind Creative is a New York-based multi-disciplinary studio specializing in the design of graphics, media, interactives, and environments. For the Louisiana exhibition, Whirlwind Creative collaborated with Ms. Napoli and Mr. Crier to engineer a unique edifice in contrast to the breached floodwalls.

Floodwall, the exhibit, is complemented by an ongoing oral history project to record interviews with the former drawer owners. Managed and produced by New Orleans native Tatiana Clay, this component of **Floodwall** aims to empower everyday people by giving them a way to document their own history. Edited by Cramer Sound, excerpts of these interviews are

incorporated in the Baton Rouge installation. The complete collection is archived with the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History at the Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge.

Additionally, an interactive media archive on *Floodwall's* website <www.floodwall.org> documents more than 600 salvaged drawers, along with mapping of their provenance, expanded oral history transcriptions, and a photo-archive of the drawers. New Orleans media artist Rondell Crier is creating this living database to document a sense of the magnitude of loss by collecting the minute details of quotidian objects.

Jana Napoli is a New Orleans native and painter who was a pioneer in 1986 of the burgeoning New Orleans Arts District when she established her own gallery in that neighborhood. In 1988, she opened the doors of her studio to the commercial art students of the neighboring vocational high school and YA/YA, the New Orleans-based, acclaimed youth arts collective, was born. Floodwall has evolved to engage several emerging young artists of New Orleans whom Ms. Napoli mentored during her years as the founding director.

The Louisiana State Museum – Baton Rouge is adjacent to the State Capital at 660 North 4th Street. The museum is open Tuesday-Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors, students and active military, and children under 12 are free. For more information, call 225-342-5428 or click <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us>.

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