



# Louisiana Association of Museums

[www.louisianamuseums.org/](http://www.louisianamuseums.org/)

## Katrina Deconstructed

### New Orleans' Contemporary Arts Center hosts "Previously on Piety" art works



fireplace grate among them) are conjoined to a tree which has grown as if out of CAC's lobby. The tree serves as a symbol of historical roots, and announces to visitors that external landscapes have found their way inside.

Dual rows of Jana Napoli's *Floodwall*, comprised of two 32-foot sections standing ten feet high, rule the first floor's terrain. They are a memorial made from the 700 kitchen, bathroom, and bureau drawers of every style and construction that Napoli collected from flood debris piles during the months following Katrina. In *Floodwall*, drawers do not keep, but are kept, and provide sacred reminder of the uncountable intimate objects, now lost, which each drawer once contained. A large-scale map of greater New Orleans covers the wall beside *Floodwall* like a tapestry, pinpointing where each drawer was found.

A special room has been created to house Gerard Caliste's *Walking on Water*. In it, Hurricane Katrina is captured between four walls and swirled into a sort of spin-art nightmare. One wall depicts a neighborhood holding vigil, while the other walls contain paintings, a television, and other familiar living room objects. The floor is painted with rising floodwaters from which a roof emerges. A hand reaches from the attic, grasping for

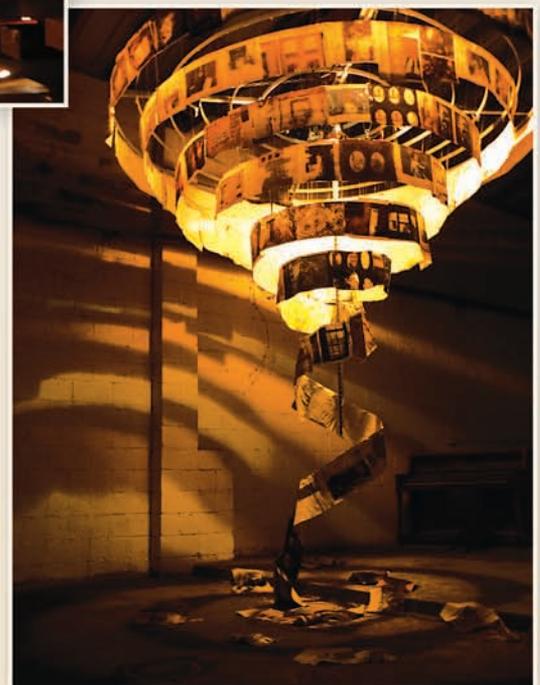
Prospect.1 New Orleans [P.1], the largest biennial of international contemporary art ever organized in the United States, ran from November 1, 2008 through January 18, 2009 in museums, historic buildings, and found sites throughout New Orleans. The citywide arts collaborative also spawned many unofficial satellite exhibitions, among them "On Piety," which refers to the Bywater neighborhood warehouse where several Katrina-inspired installations made their New Orleans debut. Those art works have now been relocated to the city's Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) where they will remain on view in an exhibition titled "Previously on Piety" through July 12, 2009.



"Previously on Piety" includes, from top, *Walking on Water* by Gerard Caliste, *Floodwall*, by Jana Napoli, and *Biography of a House* by Jan Gilbert.

Each installation in "Previously on Piety" summons the post-Katrina landscape where the inside and outside are juxtaposed, where household objects are returned to nature, and nature invades personal spaces. Family, home, and community comprise the elements of these installations as essentially as nail, glue and steel.

Rontherin Ratliff's sculpture, *Rooted*, is the first installation confronted upon entering the museum. Objects of domestic architecture (a window frame and



#### CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

900 Camp St. • New Orleans, LA 70130  
(504) 528-3805 • [www.cacno.org](http://www.cacno.org)

**HOURS:**  
Thursday through Sunday:  
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**ADMISSION:**  
Free through July 12, 2009

the rope dangling from the whirlpool-painted ceiling. Escape is tentative, a room no longer a safe haven.

The necessity to document and preserve are affirmed by Rondell Crier's *On the Streets*. A wooden silhouette of the Honda that Crier drove around New Orleans filming Katrina's devastation now projects the potent video Crier shot onto an adjacent wall. Here the utilitarian function of a car expands, transforming the viewer into a witness of catastrophe.

Jan Gilbert's *Biography of a House* hangs majestically before

CAC's Camp Street window like the proud chandelier of a Garden District mansion. But it is not merely a chandelier; it is also a photo album in the form of a cyclone, its circling metal frame supporting dozens of Gilbert's family photographs smeared by flood waters. Illuminated from within to backlight the photos, *Biography of a House* is, like each installation of the exhibition, a wholly new type of furniture, where a whirlpool of images are sucked into the spigot of memory.

—Adam Falik



## Imperial Domain

### Southwest Louisiana's history and culture is captured in a Lake Charles museum

The Imperial Calcasieu Museum in Lake Charles serves the five parish area of Calcasieu, Cameron, Beauregard, Allen, and Jeff Davis in Southwest Louisiana, an area originally known as the Imperial Calcasieu Region.

The museum was established by the Junior League of Lake Charles in March of 1963, and was housed in City Hall. In December of 1963, through the cooperation of The Parish Police Jury, the museum was moved to 1019 Lakeshore Drive. In 1966, administration was assumed by a non-profit organization, The Fine Arts Center and Museum of Old Imperial Calcasieu, Inc. The name was changed in 1971 to Imperial Calcasieu Museum, Inc., and under this administration the present-day museum at 204 W. Sallier Street was permanently established.

The museum includes:

- The Historic Exhibit, a gallery with rotating artifacts depicting life in Southwest Louisiana from circa 1850 through the present. Period rooms replicate a turn-of-the-century kitchen and parlor, a barbershop, and a pharmacy. Other exhibits interpret U.S. military history, Native Americans, and regional waterways.
- The Gibson Library houses historical documents as well as an extensive collection of John James Audubon prints. The museum's permanent art collection also consists of works by Boyd Cruise and prints by Charlotte Hatchette. The library is also used for small temporary exhibitions and is the current home for an annual Summer Film Series.
- The Gibson-Barham Gallery plays host to more than six temporary art exhibits each year, including both local and nationally-known artists.
- The Sallier Oak and Lynda Benglis Sculpture Garden features the contemporary sculptures of Louisiana artist Lynda Benglis and a rare 400-year-old live oak tree.
- The Gallery Annex features temporary fine art and historic exhibits and provides space for regional emerging artists. The annex also houses a small gift shop, meeting space, and the museum's offices.

The Imperial Calcasieu Museum celebrated its 45th anniversary in 2008 as the only major visual arts and culture institution serving the area.



#### IMPERIAL CALCASIEU MUSEUM

204 W. Sallier Street • Lake Charles, LA 70601  
(337) 439-3797 • [www.imperialcalcasieumuseum.org](http://www.imperialcalcasieumuseum.org)

#### HOURS:

Tuesday through Sunday:  
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

#### ADMISSION:

\$5 for adults; \$2 for children and senior citizens; group rates available upon request

top left: Among the artifacts in the Imperial Calcasieu Museum's history gallery is a Victorian washstand, circa 1890.  
top center: In partnership with the Lake Charles *American Press* newspaper, in 2007 the museum hosted "Hurry on Down," an exhibit on the life and career of Nellie Lutcher, a renowned jazz vocalist born and raised in the city. The musician's traveling trunk and performance outfits were among the displays.  
top right: The captain's wheel from the *Borealis Rex* steam ship is part of the museum's permanent collection.