

Another Storm Is Coming

Judy Natal

The land and water between New Orleans and Houston, commonly referred to as the Energy Coast, literally seems to float as a kind of terra infirma that is liquid and fluidly unstable; a watery mirage drawn by human intervention and land use that persists long after the storm. The land and water uniquely mirror each other, both in human folly as well as human achievement. It has been equally devastated by hurricanes, flooding, loss of wetlands and sea level rise, and the ever-present reality of disastrous oil spills that devastate animals, ecosystems and humanity equally.

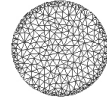
Commemorating the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coasts of Louisiana and Texas, Judy Natal's *Another Storm is Coming* is a commission by the Center for Energy & Environmental Research in the Human Sciences (CENHS) at Rice University, in collaboration with FotoFest International Biennial in Houston, Texas.

The cover photograph depicts the Galveston seawall built after the Great 1900 Hurricane that smashed directly into Galveston, Texas. This storm was the deadliest hurricane in the U.S. which left between 6,000 to 12,000 fatalities and leveled the town. African American men were forcibly recruited at gunpoint to load the dead onto barges and burn the bodies. The song that commemorates this event, "Wasn't that a Mighty Storm," began as a spiritual in the Black church by Sin-Killer Griffin, and was first recorded in 1934 at Darrington Prison in Sandy Point, Texas. Natal used the many iterations of this spiritual as the soundtrack for her video *Another Storm is Coming: Storm Redux* which consists of oral histories of individuals who lived through the recurring cycles of hurricanes along the Gulf Coast that include Hurricane Audrey (1957) up to present day Hurricanes Rita

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(2005), Katrina (2005), and Ike (2008). Natal pays homage to the Galveston seawall, using the camera's exquisite photographic eye to draw attention to the age of the wall and its poor condition.

The title phrase "Another Storm is Coming" comes from a piece of graffiti that Natal stumbled upon at the start of her project at the abandoned amusement park that was blown to shreds by Hurricane Katrina on the edge of Lake Pontchartrain in New Orleans. Instantly recognizing the prophecy, the poetry and the truth the phrase held, Natal used this as a fitting title for her project. With each cycle of hurricane that hits the Gulf Coast, Natal relives the stories she recorded of repetitive cycles of loss and devastation, and is haunted by the tragic stories of the resilient people she met whose lives are drastically redrawn again and again to this day. The Gulf Coast waters continue to dramatically warm due to the climate crisis. There will be another storm.



www.judynatal.com

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