



Sofa, Lakeview



Shoes, 9th Ward

# EYE OF THE STORM

A New Orleans photographer focuses on the details left in the debris of Hurricane Katrina

photo essay by **SANDRA BURSHELL**

**N**ews media coverage of Hurricane Katrina allowed the world to witness the the horrors of the disaster, both natural and man-made, upon New Orleans. What could not be conveyed on the TV screen or the printed page, however, were that these images of devastation were not single vignettes but part of a greater devastated landscape — a 360-degree panorama of destruction, continuing on for miles in all directions.

I spent October 2005 through March 2006 taking photographs of the ravages of Katrina as a way of dealing with the tragedy and to assuage my own guilt for sustaining only minor damage to my home. I spent most of my time in New Orleans' Ninth Ward and Lakeview, but I also photographed the neighborhoods of Gentilly, Mereaux, St. Bernard.

What struck me most in the beginning was the silence. I saw no people, no moving cars, no birds, no vegetation, no sound other than rustling debris. This wasteland seemingly had no beginning and no end. To document the enormity of this tragedy was simply too depressing a task.

My view in life has always been to find beauty and humanity in all that I see. I decided to attempt to find such elusive qualities in this devastation, by zooming in on the details. Simple objects could represent enormous loss. The images printed here are universal, yet personal.

I concentrated on composition, often abstracting scenes to find interest in patterns. Color was kept muted because the city was submerged in water and mud.

A selection of my photographs were exhibited at "Katrina Exposed: A Photographic Reckoning" at the New Orleans Museum of Art in 2006 and were chosen to appear in the accompanying catalog. In addition, some have become part of the museum's permanent collection, the Katrina Memorial Photographic Portfolio. These photographs, along with my pastels are on exhibit at the Carol Robinson Gallery in New Orleans which has represented my work for the past 20 years. For more information, log on to: [www.carolrobinsongallery.com](http://www.carolrobinsongallery.com)



9-25, Gentilly

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Rape of Closet



Wedding Picture



Hanging, Mereax



Belongings Pontchartrain Dump



Green Dress, Lakeview



Interior #2, Gentilly



Cutlery, Lakeview



Blinds



Entry #1, Lakeview



Windshield Mud, Lakeview



Box Spring



Window #4, Lakeview