

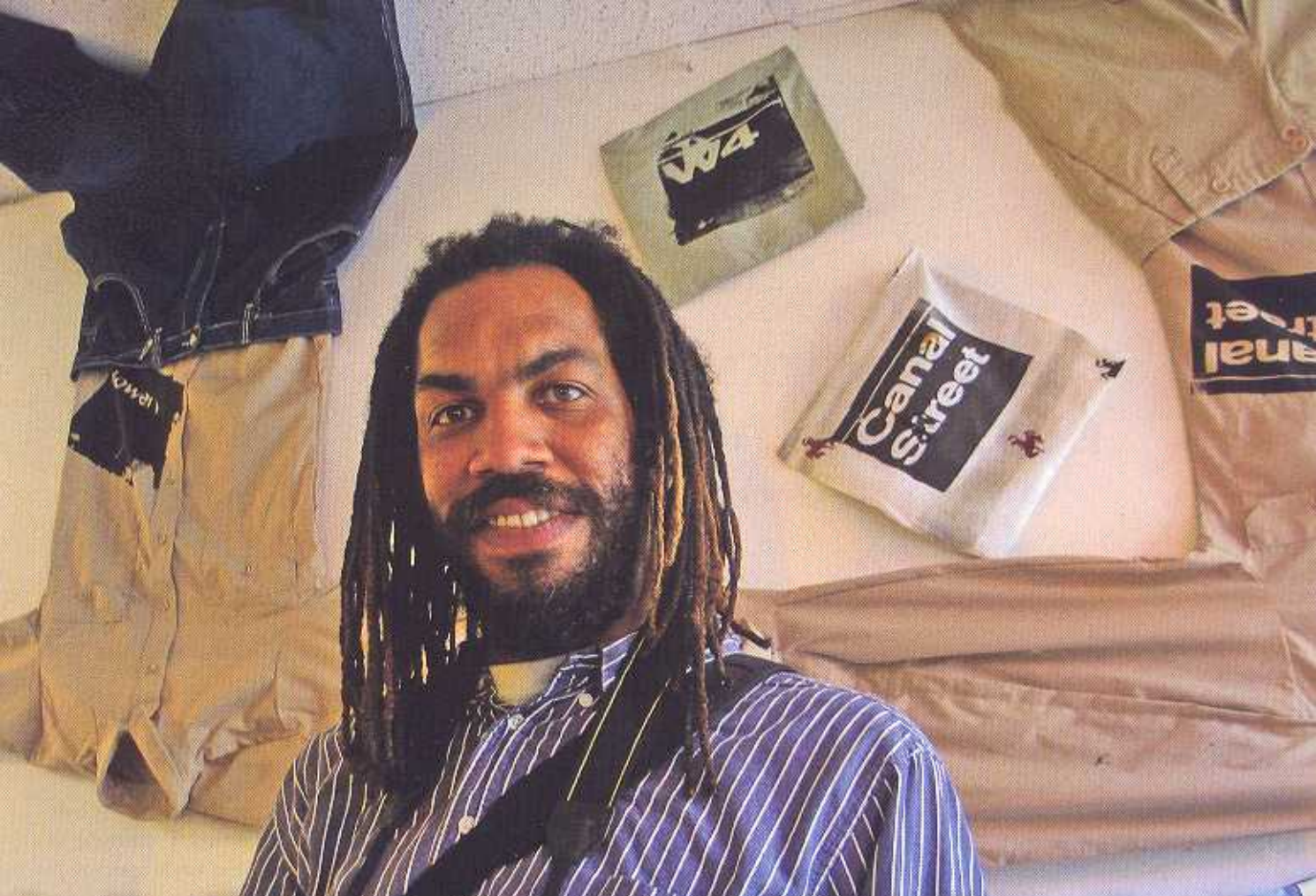
ONE YEAR AFTER
KATRINA



TRA

**In New York,
14 New Orleans artists
are offered shelter
from the storm**

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY LEE LAWRENCE



MANHATTAN TRANSFER

WHEN HURRICANE IVAN CHURNED TOWARD NEW Orleans in September 2004, thousands of residents boarded up their houses, loaded their cars and fled to high ground. Days later, they came back wondering what all the fuss was about. Ivan had barely left a puddle.

So when news of Katrina hit the airwaves late last summer, many treated the evacuation as a formality and left with little more than their toothbrushes, certain they would be home in a matter of days. Christopher Saucedo, a sculptor and professor at the University of New Orleans, took the time to screw on the light plate in the bathroom of his studio—the final touch in a 12-year renovation—before heading out with his wife and two children. Photographer Clifton Faust tossed a bag of laundry onto the back seat of his car, locked

After Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans photographer Clifton Faust, above, began silk-screening clothes with names of New York City subway stops for the installation "I Think I Landed on Planet Earth." Elizabeth Bick says the emotional content of photos she took in New York differed from those she had shot in New Orleans. Christopher Saucedo looked inward, creating an assemblage, left, incorporating weights signifying his size and a family photo.

THIS

**IS MY KATRINA
PAIN—STILL THERE,
BUT DISPLACED.”**

—CHRISTOPHER SAUCEDO, SCULPTOR

the door to his house and drove off. Artist Dan Tague didn't even bother to do that. He stayed, getting together with friends for a barbecue under the clear blue skies Katrina had left in its wake.

But this time the levees gave way, and by the second day the water rushed in “so fast,” Tague recalls, “there were whitecaps.” Seven days later a motorboat rescued him from his roof, and Tague joined the ranks of the evacuees.

News of the disaster prompted the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC) in New York to put together a residency for artists who could no longer work in New Orleans. From November through June, the residency provided studio space in a loft in TriBeCa, a stipend and the help of local artist Anna Craycroft to navigate one of the country's hottest contemporary art scenes. About 50 artists applied; 14 were accepted, Saucedo, Faust and Tague among them.

Although life was nowhere near back to normal—there was much hopscotching from friend to friend before finding a rental or a sublet—the new LMCC residents had studios, and as photographer Christine Catsifas put it, were “here every day. It was an anchor.”

After two months in limbo, they could get back to doing what they loved: making art.

Artists engaged in long-term projects picked up where they had left off—in Catsifas's case, this meant returning to a collaborative documentation of artificial landscapes inside casinos (look closely at her skyscape and you will detect the outline of sprinklers).

And there were artists who, while not working on specific projects, pretty much continued as before. In Tague's case, this meant creating pieces with barbed humor. A flamingo of jiggly neon-bright pink rubber is part of a work in progress called “Suburban Dream Catchers.” “I'll put a big hook into it,” he said during an Open Studio Weekend exhibition at the loft in late April, “and package it like a lure.” Asked what he planned to catch with it, Tague deadpanned, “Great Whites!”



Julie Anne Pieri comments on the national response to New Orleans' needs in an installation called “Sleep on It.”

Katrina, however, has already visibly affected much of the art made by its victims. For those who favor social commentary, there have not been any surprising shifts in subject matter. Julie Anne Pieri created the installation “Sleep on It,” in which she dresses as “a looney politician” and, using an American flag as a blanket, naps on a mound of cardboard

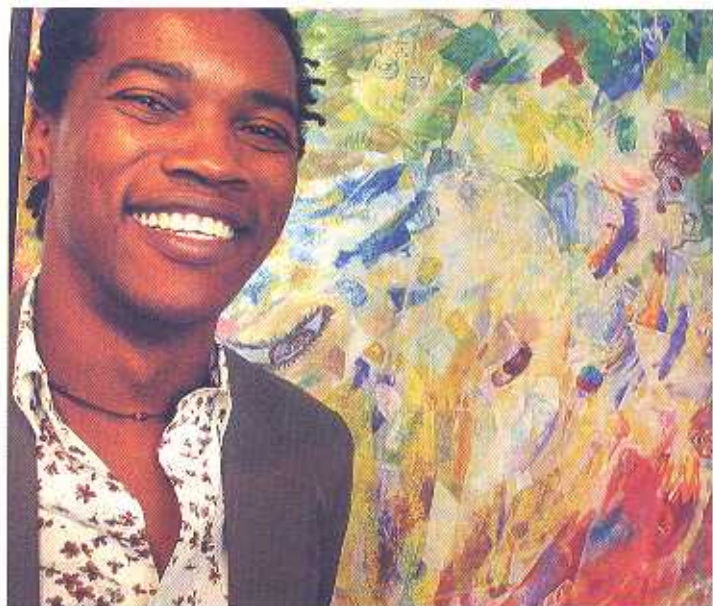


houses. As she tosses and turns, the houses collapse and tumble.

While less overtly political, photographer Elizabeth Bick's work also slices into and exposes aspects of the world around her. In New Orleans she photographed practitioners of voodoo, zeroing in on "the moment of divine intervention." In New York, Bick trained her camera on sex workers and the back seats of taxicabs.

The resulting Louisiana images are engaging and warm; the New York portraits are cool and enigmatic, emblematic of the "anonymous, uninitiated interactions" that, Bick says, occur in "a city bombarded with people." In New Orleans each image grew out of hours of listening, talking and relating; in New York, "I picked up these people off the street and paid them to provide a service." She neither asked questions nor offered information.

The shifts in other instances were manifested in the way artists work. "After Katrina, I was deflated about doing any of that process," Faust said, referring to sculptural photographic assemblages. He now combines photography with silk-screening. Flung around the walls and ceiling of his studio were shirts and trousers bearing the names of New York City subway stops. He called the installation "I Think I Landed on Planet Earth."



After years of probing the nature of sculpture, first with large-scale works, then with small-scale, unassembled versions, Saucedo seems to be more interested in figuring out who and what he is. Witness his giant rendition of the kind of cylindrical weights our grandparents used on scales. It represents the artist's exact poundage and volume

Vidho Lorville, above, has turned to a more spontaneous technique in his painting since Katrina. Dan Tague lost none of his sharp wit: he studded a baseball bat with religious figurines to create "Holy Stick," top. Christine Catsifas used her time in New York to resume a collaboration.



and is part of a series of such portraits. "Self Portrait with Some Flesh Removed" has a removable slice, "kind of like the *Merchant of Venice* and the idea of a cathartic sacrifice," Saucedo explained. "This is my Katrina pain—still there, but displaced."

The work of Vidho Lorville offers another clear example. A native of Haiti who moved to New Orleans in 2001, Lorville used to lift brush to canvas with a clear idea in mind. Now he splashes and splatters colors, letting the texture of the canvas determine what sticks, what doesn't and how much. He then sets about highlighting images he detects in the chaos—an elongated foot here, the silhouette of a man there—not so much to impose order as to ferret out forms from the chaos.

Yes, Katrina pervades these artists' work, yet perhaps nowhere is it more lyrically expressed than in Beth Dary's three-dimensional drawings. Circles of different sizes, some only outlined, others filled in, covered the fabric walls of her studio space. More circles dangled from the

Multimedia artist Beth Dary used pins in works to symbolize the prickly uncertainties in everyday life.

ceiling like mobiles. If you looked closely, you could see that one side was nubby, dense with smooth, rounded pinheads that she had patiently and methodically applied. On the reverse side, however, the circles bristled with sharp, thin shafts of metal, painful to the touch.

These bubbles were made with pins in a process that echoes the way the LMCC artists—and people in general—go about their days, taking the next logical step, all the while knowing that dangers could lie ahead. "We're all in our own bubbles. Sometimes they collide," Dary said, giving a couple of the hanging circles a gentle push. "Sometimes they miss. Sometimes they clamp onto each other. And sometimes they pop." ●

LEE LAWRENCE is a regular contributor to AMERICANSTYLE. She writes about the arts from her home in Washington, D.C.

► To see more images of work by these artists, go to www.americanstyle.com.

For eight months, these 14 artists worked in studio space provided by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. Now they are once again on the move.

Christopher Saucedo, sculptor, had just finished 12 years of renovating his home and studio when he fled Katrina's approach. He's trying to find a way to live in both his native Brooklyn and his beloved New Orleans. www.saucedostudio.com

Shawn Hall, painter, is looking forward to getting back to her home and studio in New Orleans, but first is going to residencies in Los Angeles, Santa Fe and France. www.shawnhall.org

BERNARD PEARCE



Elizabeth Bick, photographer, is headed for residencies in Santa Fe and France, after which she hopes to enter a master's program. She says she is "OK with the fact that I have to move on." www.elizabethbick.com

Dan Tague, mixed-media artist, is so delighted to be in New York where "people actually buy this kind of work" that he hopes to return after a series of other residencies. www.dantague.com

Christy Speakman, photographer, has a job in New York that she will come back to after a three-month residency in Santa Fe. She has family in New Orleans but, for the time being, is shifting her center of gravity.

Vidho Lorville, painter, is working hard to find a way to go back to New Orleans, at least part time, to paint and resume teaching and leading children's art programs. www.vidholorville.com

Clifton Faust, photographer, has lived in New Orleans most of his life and is now hanging loose, waiting to see what opportunities open up.

Stephen Collier, multimedia artist, studied and worked in New Orleans, but encouraged by (and grateful for) contacts made during the residency, he plans to stay on in New York. www.whitecolumns.org, under artists registry

Julie Anne Pieri, visual artist, is looking for a job and a place to live in New York, although she hopes to spend plenty of time in New Orleans as well.

Chris Jahncke, painter, is in New Orleans preparing for the Louisiana Biennial at the Contemporary Art Center, which begins in October. After that he hopes to keep one foot in New York. www.chrisjahncke.com

Rachel Perkoff, filmmaker, had residencies lined up for several months. She hopes to stay on in New York to edit and find funding for her documentary, *Another Lost Angel*, about the tumultuous life and tragic death of her sister. <http://anotherlostangel.org>

Christine Catsifas, photographer, has probably said goodbye to New Orleans, what with rents being unaffordably high and jobs scarce. New York is an option, maybe California—"a lot is still up in the air." www.ccatsifas.com

Beth Dary, multimedia artist, will work on new sculptures at the Johnson Atelier in New Jersey and then head back to New Orleans to the house she bought six weeks before it was damaged by Katrina. www.bethdary.com

Bernard Pearce, musician, composer and poet, actor and filmmaker, is busy touring the U.S. and performing. When he lands it could likely be in Oregon, Louisiana or New York. www.onemanmachine.com

See also www.lmcc.net/artresidencies/gulfcoast/artists.html for biographies and images of their work.



ALL TOGETHER NOW

Former President Bill Clinton stopped by the TriBeCa studio last spring to meet the LMCC residents, including from left, Dan Tague, Shawn Hall, Chris Jahncke, Christine Catsifas, Christopher Saucedo, Christy Speakman, Vidho Lorville, Beth Dary, Rachel Perkoff, Clifton Faust, Stephen Collier and Julie Anne Pieri.