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New Orleans

Art and the Oil Spill: A letter from Dan Cameron

Prospect New Orleans founder, Dan Cameron, has released a letter addressing the devastating effects of the BP oil spill and the role of the city's artist community in this dire time. Below is Mr. Cameron's letter:

"Like you, those of us who work everyday to lift New Orleans up have been alternately frustrated, saddened, and sickened by the oil spill and unfolding environmental catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico. As we move further from April 20, when the first hundred thousand barrels of oil surged into the ocean, it seems increasingly likely that the magnitude of devastation will surpass our worst nightmares. Beyond the immediate loss of flora and fauna, and the thousands of jobs that have disappeared overnight, there is long-term damage to consider.

How, you might ask, does contemporary art play a role in this painful scenario?

Artists in New Orleans and beyond have, for years, created works that expose the incongruity between the beauty and fragility of the Louisiana wetlands and the raw power of the oil industry that has put this vital aspect of New Orleans at great risk. Perhaps not surprisingly, many artists in New Orleans – Skylar Fein, Dawn Dedeaux, Anastasia Pelias, Dan Tague, Robert Tannen, Michel Varisco, and many others – have been on the front lines since the very first day of the disaster, volunteering as first responders, supporting organizations that advocate for sustainable Gulf economies, and documenting the crisis as it unfolds. Even more crucially, art and artists are the lifeblood of New Orleans' cultural identity – invaluable to the character of the Crescent City and essential to its appeal as a tourist destination. Art comprises one of New Orleans' most important natural resources; the arts community has proven its perseverance and adaptability in the face of great adversity, and its centrality to the revitalization of the city post-Katrina.

It is clear now more than ever, that the economic future of the city is closely tied to its image as a hotbed of creativity. We remain committed to our belief that Prospect New Orleans can play an important role in helping the city recover as quickly and fully as possible from the post-Katrina devastation that spurred the creation of the Biennial, and continuing now with the current challenge on the Gulf Coast.

Thank you for your support,
Dan Cameron"

www.prospectneworleans.org



Dan Cameron