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introduction

by PATRICK STRANGE

Welcome to *Constance: Delicate Burdens*. As the culmination of countless volunteer efforts, many sleepless nights, and some hearty doses of wishful thinking, the second issue of *Constance* arrives with the same purpose as the first: to further the understanding of what it means to make New Orleans home through the work of those who know it best.

The following pages attest to all those who continue to express their centermost experiences in an environment marred with loss, anger and frustration. Just like most who are working to rebuild their lives in New Orleans or struggling to return to their birthplace, these writers and visual artists continue their work not out of obligation or nostalgia or even loyalty, but because on some fundamental level, they feel that they must. As always, *Constance* is dedicated to them.

The design, packaging and submission content for *Delicate Burdens* are shaped by the issue's theme. While the first installment, *Replicas and Replacements*,

hinted at the potentiality felt immediately following Katrina, *Delicate Burdens* comes to the difficult realization that any rebirth will be a long-labored and complicated one. The phoenix that rises from the ashes is a thing of myth, and sadly, so is the notion that New Orleans and the central Gulf Coast will be rebuilt quickly by people who always have the good of the citizens in mind. From this deep and often murky well of shared grief and anxiety, we've drawn the impetus for *Delicate Burdens*—an issue that strives to be joyful while also acknowledging that much suffering still persists in the region.

However, as you read *Delicate Burdens*, you will discover that in the midst of sobering and sometimes unforgiving introspection rise voices as buoyant and playful as they are singular. Still present are the personalized profiles and contact information provided by the visual artists and writers themselves. Offering a glimpse into the private lives and artistic motives of the contributors, the biographies remind us that no matter how many times New Orleans may be over-simplified by outsiders or the national media, this is a community

made of individuals, each with his or her own cross to bear and story to tell. We encourage you take a moment to read each page in its entirety, and in doing so, get to know more about the city, its artists, and what it means to create in such an unpredictable, unfathomable place.

People often ask if *Constance* is meant to memorialize Katrina. While it's not intended to serve as an anthology that solely explores issues relating to the storm, as a New Orleans publication, *Constance* is inextricably connected to Katrina and the ensuing human crisis. Contrary to the common misconception that the worst is all but over, New Orleans and the immediate region continue to endure the brunt of the disaster, and will continue doing so well into the foreseeable future. As such, the work featured here is born from writers and visual artists confronting psychological and cultural upheavals on a consistent basis, and the art they produce is undoubtedly formed by this ongoing battle. Perhaps our real task is not to remember Katrina, prove what went wrong or find those most suitable for blame, but to ask how and when this storm will ever come to an end.

burdens

