

A pair of post-Katrina gems from UNO Press

By Suzanne Stouse
Contributing writer

University publishers have distinguished themselves on the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, particularly UNO Press.

"When the Water Came: Evacuees of Hurricane Katrina" (UNO Press, \$24.95), a collection of "interview-poems" by onetime Orleanian Cynthia Hogue with gorgeous photography by Rebecca Ross, is an extraordinary look into the lives of 13 New Orleanians who ended up in Arizona after Katrina.

But "interview-poems"? Actually, it works beautifully, with each terrible or funny or sad

story shaped by Hogue, who condensed the interviews but added nothing.

The pieces are long, printed in a single column amid a huge swath of white space, which also frames Ross' large photographs of homes and yards and possessions then and now — a figurine of a horse, a white rocker on a porch where somebody sat for days waiting for the helicopters. Because the poems continue for several pages, it's impossible to print one in its entirety here.

The poets are artists, teachers, a casino bartender from Diamondhead, a Vietnam vet "with nobody but me to help me," a retired auto mechanic. Many of the poems, as expected, channel outrage. Writer Sally Cole, pictured against the rocks and big

sky of Tucson, puts it plainly:

Insurance adjusters are the scum of the earth / They eat their young. / They nickled and dimed us to death.

Other stories are funny and sad at once, maybe like the people who tell them. All in one piece, Miriam Youngerman Miller mourns the loss of her home next to the London Avenue Canal, rails against the destruction of New Orleans' diverse neighborhoods, and hails the volunteers who gutted her house.

The book's last word, fitting for this day, is left to Freddie Munn, the mechanic: "Keep yourself from the negative."

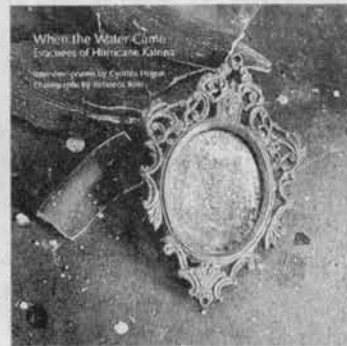
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"Before (During) After: Louisiana Photographers' Visual Reactions to

Hurricane Katrina" (UNO Press, \$24.95) is another treasure, a beautifully designed book with powerful pictures and essays by 12 photographers on the ways Katrina refocused their work.

Jennifer Shaw, who for years photographed urban landscapes, discovered "a wonderful catharsis" after covering the storm's destruction: telling her own storm story. No longer shooting "the world around me, documenting things as I found them," she began working with hand-painted props, setting up her own "tiny worlds" with tiny people.

Frank Relle segued from artful architectural work to taking pictures of homes' abandonment. Rowan Metzner, the book's photo editor, moved from making beautiful abstract portraits of the



body in black and white to using color — the better to capture the telling details in pictures of ruined possessions.

With so many arresting images, there's no such thing as flipping through this book. You're stopped dead from the get-go by a cover image of a drowned, disintegrated keyboard by Samuel Portera, who lost his St. Bernard home; by the pickets of a drowned fence poking out of the

water; a picture by photojournalist David Rae Morris; by Eric Julien's beautiful mixed-media collage work.

Louisiana State Museum curator of visual arts Tony Lewis calls the photographers agents of change: "As we internalize these images," he writes, "and make them part of our individual and collective memory, if we can see them as calls to action, that can make all the difference."

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