



FRONT PORCH

<i>e.04</i>	CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES
<i>e.07</i>	NARRATIVE WALK-THROUGH
<i>e.13</i>	VISITOR EXPERIENCE
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**Inside,
Out Among Our Place**

From this wooden perch,
rocking lightly, there are in my view
many sights that promise
to be warm and held true as soil.

Robert builds with quiet hands
a small fiber corner in the shadows
of a patient yet ailing roof
and he leans against
the exposed insipid-white ribs
that are also
waiting.

Ms. Johnston, in her proud anger,
rubs the loose skin of her knees
bending in her seat with hardly any sound.
Her voice is seldom except to speak.
She comments on how
quiet the streets are now and you know
that she is missing him.

Little Cameron lost her bracelet
and passes, in the medium shade,
bites the corners of her lower lip
and seems as if she has also
managed to misplace the memories
that might make a child want
to stay inside.

We call her Lulu, and
she waddles in to make her say
stating the money still hasn't come and
we all know she has larger wrongs to voice,
but respectfully presents only the smaller
a public word.

With my feet here, firm on this floor
above the matted ground,
I can see this place in which
I have kept my house and
saved my friends.

Here up on these boards,
I know where I am
and all those that have chosen
to be here with me,
each a wandering piece
of an aimless circle.



FRONT PORCH

CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES

The front porch has historically been a place where days wound down, generations of family were made known to each other, and local news made its way through the town. This porch is no different, except that it is more.

This porch is the path between past and present tenses. Visitors to the After August Museum may leave the first building, pause for a bit on the porch to remind themselves of the day in which they are before continuing on to the

second building full of progress and change. It is a vantage point that, because of its placement between times, brings the current time into a brighter light. As with other porches, a person can stand both indoors and out—in the same instance. However, the After August Museum's porch doesn't belong to just one neighbor. It belongs to all the neighbors. It is the community's place to stand or sit and see the community as it is.

Sometimes, the traditional front porch has been a birthplace for big ideas. An innocent conversation, given time and desire, becomes a brainstorm of ideas for the world beyond. The Museum's own porch is meant to continue this tradition and provide a setting for positive change to occur between visitors.



Two steps upward from the grass, sliding out of the sun through the threshold of shade, I am on a plateau. I can feel the light on my neck turn cool as the shadow of the roof slides over my cotton shoulders. The breeze is still with me and the hisses of nearby oaks' leaves have not been silenced.

The floor is smooth and placid like a wooden plate for feet and pollen—that velvet dust of disseminating life in which children have fingered their names. The sturdy parallel planks hold the two buildings together like a father's gentlest hug amidst a crowd of worrisome shadows. Looking down at the blonde wood, I wonder about the lizards and bugs that must be living under there, curious if they are the same creatures that crawled here before the flood. If they are, how did they survive? If they are not, how far had they crawled to find refuge under this specific porch, to look up through the cracks at my Adidas's rubber soles?

There are wooden chairs of assorted compositions along the wall of the building. In the medium light of the day, they cast soft grey shadows on the wooden floor and the building's pale blue, wooden siding. The seats are of varying ages. Some of the elderly have had the finish of

their arms worn through to the smoothed, blonde wood beneath. The newcomers are shiny, slick and sturdy in their proud youth. None of them sit aligned in any kind of discernible order. It is obvious in an instant that the chairs are not unaccustomed to use by active bodies with friendly fannies.

I walk slowly and drag two fingertips along the flat of the railing that surrounds the porch like the rim of an old ceramic mug, rough and smooth in the same instance. Beneath the top plane over which my fingers slide, the wooden verticals are straining the sun's light, seemingly filtering out the harshness of the Southern summer heat as it falls crisp on my passing ankles.

There is a smell familiar to anyone who may have grown up with a handy relative or in a place where timber routinely become lumber. The porch wood is new and smells like a carpenter's shop, a scent that is universally nostalgic of freer, younger times. Beneath the smell, are other smells: a distant sea, young grass, recent paint.

I can hear the echoes of kind discussion bouncing around the corner, out from the speckled light and shade that blanket the tables and chairs in the breezeway.

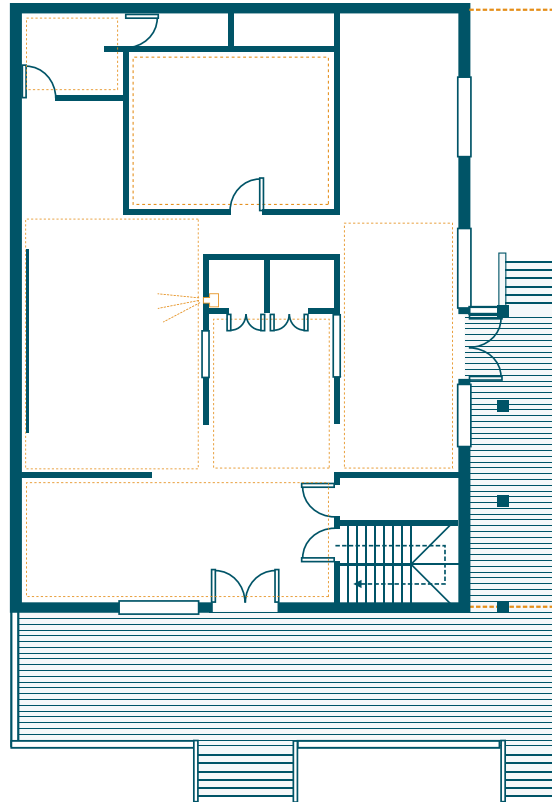




VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The After August Museum's front porch is a fairly common porch. There are no signs (except one that quietly hangs overhead reading the name of the museum). There are no interpretations to be made. There are no interactions to experience. That is, of course, aside from those interactions between human beings.

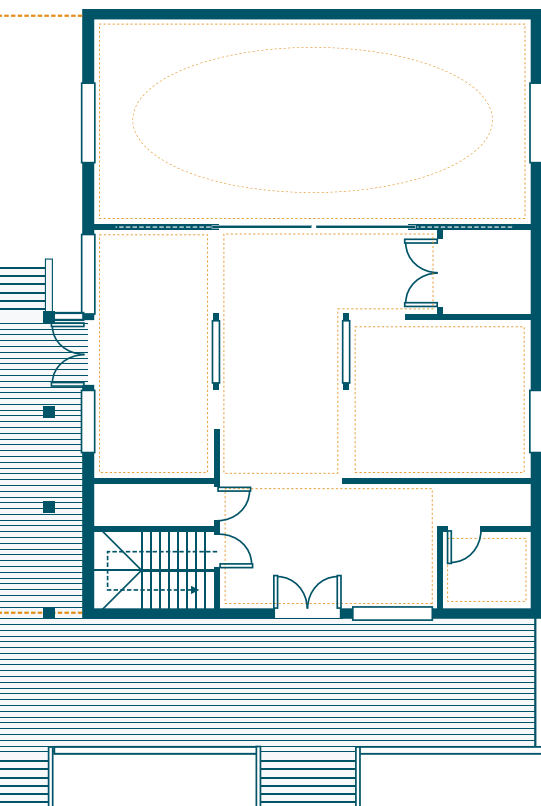
On the front porch, visitors are left to their own accord. They are free to socialize and rock slowly in one of the rocking chairs, silently considering topics of their own choosing.



PHYSICALITY

The porch will be built in part by the community. Its simple geometry and common materials make the job an uncomplicated one. Still, as in the communal raising of Amish barns, it will be an effort of many that yields a place that many may call their own.

In addition to the long, wooden, rectangular area fronting the museum's two buildings, the porch will include a breezeway between the buildings. While the front section offers mainly single rocking chairs and smaller side tables, this intermediate area is spotted with round wooden tables, each surrounded by a number of wooden chairs. The tables are sized for many things: group conversations, homework sessions, a game of cards, or simply a meal. Above the tables the breezeway is covered with a checkerboard of wooden rafters. To keep out undesirable weather and let in sunshine, the checkerboard is topped with a transparent plastic roof. During the day the space is naturally lit. At night the moon shines through.



AFTER AUGUST

Front Porch

VISITOR EXPERIENCE /
PHYSICALITY

Saturday and Sunday I wasn't the least bit concerned. I didn't leave when most of my kids did. But by



I
Mon
food in, so it was more like a camp than anything. We lost electricity since the middle of the night after a tree fell on the wires leading to the transformer and started a fire in the connection box.

By Tuesday morning it looked like Algiers had made it through the storm. There were a lot of trees down, but there was no major flooding. The majority of the homes have minor to no damage. I spent Tuesday night and Wednesday night at my house. By Wednesday morning my

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**Herein,
Where History Lives**

We are all at the end
of a line of some length,
with proud-mouthed fathers,
mothers we may know,
may heavily remember.
Our pasts precede us
endlessly and without knowing
what plans we have
for crossing other paths,
tying relative knots
or making friendly tangles

We take turns,
like good school children,
eyes ahead to those preceding
those beside.

We've all seen life,
a die rolling across a crowd
of blind canes tapping
on each other's ankles,
and sometimes when
the wind is low
and the birds have come back
we will deliver in short words
what our two eyes, two ears
have received over time.

So let's, on the coming days
of careless birds and sun exposed,
gather in the shade and
remember with no whispered words
those sudden sea,
the thunder heard,
the rain that stayed
and choked our roots.
Then we will know the story
of all our storms.



EXHIBITION BUILDING

CONCEPT AND OBJECTIVES

Within this building visitors are invited to view the stories other visitors recounted of their Katrina experiences and also contribute their own stories. They will be provided with a variety of media with which to do so. The constant accumulation of these stories makes up the entire body of content exhibited in the building.

This ever-changing, ever-growing collection of stories will provide an evolving portrait of the Lower Ninth Ward's experiences during Hurricane Katrina.

Invariably each person's encounter with Katrina was unique. However, because all the experiences will share the common thread of the hurricane, the stories also function as parts of a whole, not merely a distinct narrative told from a single person's point of view. The result of the combination of all the collected stories is a history of Katrina's effects in the community by the community itself—a "self-history."

This collective story of the storm will function on two levels:

First, because each of the stories is specific to a single person, any other person who reads that story will enhance their own understanding of the complete Katrina experience and their perspective of the storm, and the resultant events will have broadened. This larger picture of Katrina will allow for a truer, more accurate understanding of the storm. With understanding, comes resolution and healing. There is the potential for any one visitor who enters the building and bears witness to every other visitor's story to leave the building with a completely fresh view of Hurricane Katrina. At the same time, they will have shared, in multiple ways, their own stories of the storm, which is, in itself, a therapeutic act.

Second, the "self-history" of the Lower Ninth Ward, a community that has often been discussed in national and international news coverage of Katrina, will be available for viewing by the public beyond the parish limits. Via Internet and walk-in visitors, the collective story of the Lower Ninth Ward's life during and following Katrina will be presented to the world as the people's history of the storm.

I feel as if I have been in this house before, when it still belonged to a family. I remember my grandmother's house as similar to this when I was young and knew that every room was there for my personal exploration. But time got to me and did not ignore this house.

The lights are low and curious, bursting brightly in certain spots above signs and inside doorways. It lets me know where my eyes belong.

The chairs and tables are unique, wooden and scratched and dinged by the coming and going of sitters. I have seen them all before, in friends' living rooms, in my parents' living room, in my grandfather's study. Every piece has traveled through other rooms to find its way here, gathering obvious stories with every rub of a wedding ring, every misplaced glass of cold beverage, and every blindly stepping shoe.

The building is a body. Its ribs exposed in places. Its joints quietly squeaking under tapping feet. But, if it has a face, I know that its mouth is smiling slightly beneath round cheeks and oval eyes.

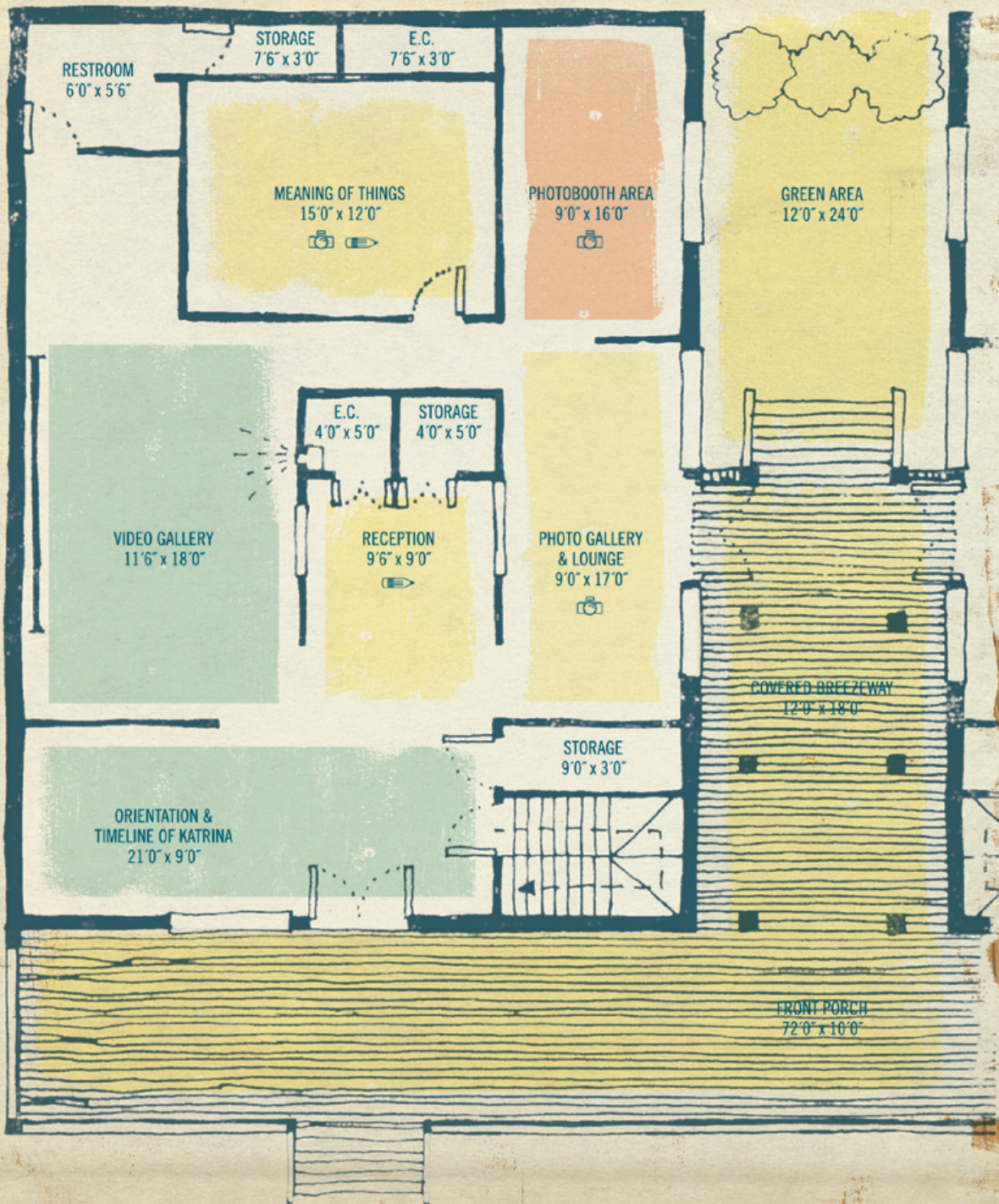
Each room is solitary, quiet, and there just for me. They hold up their walls for me and offer me their contents. I am why they are, waiting patiently behind every door. So I leave them gifts hanging on their aged wooden skin and rough steel bones.

I can trust this house and its every rounded corner because it has known the same world that I have known, it tells the stories that I have also lived. And when I speak, it echoes others' voices.

After August

EXHIBITION BUILDING





FIRST FLOOR



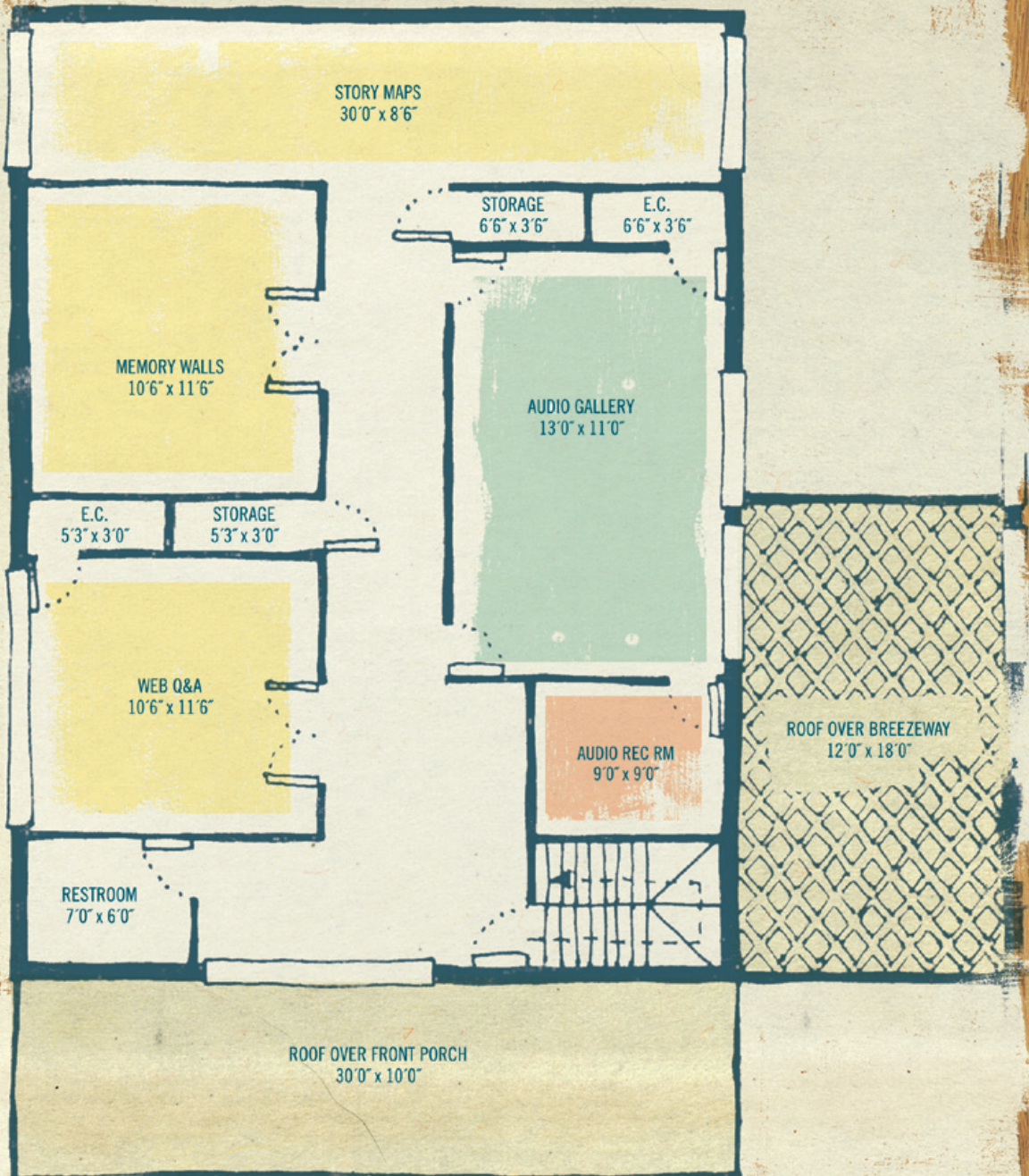
INTERACTIONS

-  Observation
-  Observation & Contribution
-  Contribution

FORM OF CONTRIBUTIONS

-  Verbal
-  Static Image
-  Kinetic Image
-  Audio

SECOND FLOOR



VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The exhibition building will be organized to offer a self-directed exploration through the defined spaces. Similar to navigating a zoo or aquarium, visitors will seek out specific exhibit spaces not sequentially but categorically. In this case, the “categories” will be decided largely by the sorts of media in which the content is presented or collected. Intermittent directional signage will point the way to specific exhibit areas.

The timeline of this exhibition becomes obvious not in the third dimension, but over time. As the situation in the Lower Ninth Ward evolves, so evolve the stories visitors will find in the physical space. This gradual change in the stories over time will be evidence of a sequence, or timeline, of change in the surrounding community. As the troubles the community is struggling with change,

the stories they have about their struggles will change accordingly. And, as the separation of time between the stories and the storm grows, the way in which the stories are told will mature.

The individual spaces are meant to be experienced as distinct exhibits. Because the stories both being interpreted and contributed are highly personal, visitors might be better served in relative isolation. If they are able to be alone with a story, whether as writer or as reader, the visitor is likely to get the most out of the encounter with that story if they are uninterrupted and undistracted. There are occasional instances when the stories are presented in a public way, leaving it up to the visitors to interact with each other or to just concentrate on the stories.

■
CONTENT

While the After August Museum has no political or social agenda, it is indifferent to all agendas that its contributors may have. Rather than achieving fairness through universal exclusion, the museum prefers to be universally inclusive.

Because the contribution of the stories by the visitors is so direct in nature, censorship of the stories is uncommon. Part of the mission of the After August Museum is to facilitate the telling of the truth about Hurricane Katrina.

■ INTERACTIONS

Most of the individual exhibits allow simultaneous contribution and observation. Hanging written stories, placing objects, or through some other material interaction, visitors will be able to have complete control over the shape of their story. Some of these interactions will be guided by a unifying system. One example is a map of the Lower Ninth Ward on which stories related to specific locations can be attached. Other exhibits will allow visitors to adopt or develop their own patterns for organizing contributed content.

There are also interactions that do take advantage of the capabilities of digital technology. However, so as not to distract from the experience of the actual stories, the technology will be designed to be transparent and user-interfaces will be as intuitive as possible. Most of these technological exhibits will be divided into two rooms—one for contribution, the other for presentation.

Beyond the visitor's interaction with contributed content, the exhibition includes some spaces that promote interpersonal interactions. These interpersonal interactions can be direct, as in groups of visitors taking part in a single collaborative story; or remote, as in Internet conversations with people all over the world wondering about the experiences surrounding Hurricane Katrina.

SERVICES

The exhibition building focuses on collecting and containing the community's "self-history."

Because this is an exhibition composed of stories from a specific locale, any storytelling project by or about the residents of the Lower Ninth Ward is relevant material for the space. Technology in this building accommodates public screenings of documentary or other film projects having to do with the area and its residents. These community-centered events help solidify the bonds between members of the community and enhance the pride they have in their neighborhood.

AFTER AUGUST

Exhibition Building

INTERACTIONS /
CONTENT



PHYSICALITY

INTERIOR

The exhibition building feels like a well-worn home. With all the personality of the traditional Southern family home, it feels alive and emanates humanity.

Both museum houses' interiors appear to be in a state of transition. The exhibition building seems to be in disrepair. Its textures are rough; its surfaces are distressed. The wood of its floors and rafters are dark and slightly discolored. Some of the walls' studs are revealed, as in other houses of the area that have been gutted to remove all the water-damaged or contaminated materials. These appearances are, however, not truly signs of transition.

MATERIALS

Both the exhibition and community buildings employ common materials (plywood, steel, etc.). In each of the buildings, the materials are combined differently to create an atmosphere specific to the space.

The wood in the exhibition building is highly textured and dark, creating a rough-edged feeling of age and history. The steel is similar. It is galvanized so its surface is obviously rough and durable.

All of these materials are easily and economically found in most U.S. cities or towns. The familiarity of the materials to visitors is designed to further suspend their disbelief that the building they are walking through is actually someone’s damaged home.

Plywood



Galvanized Steel



Vinyl



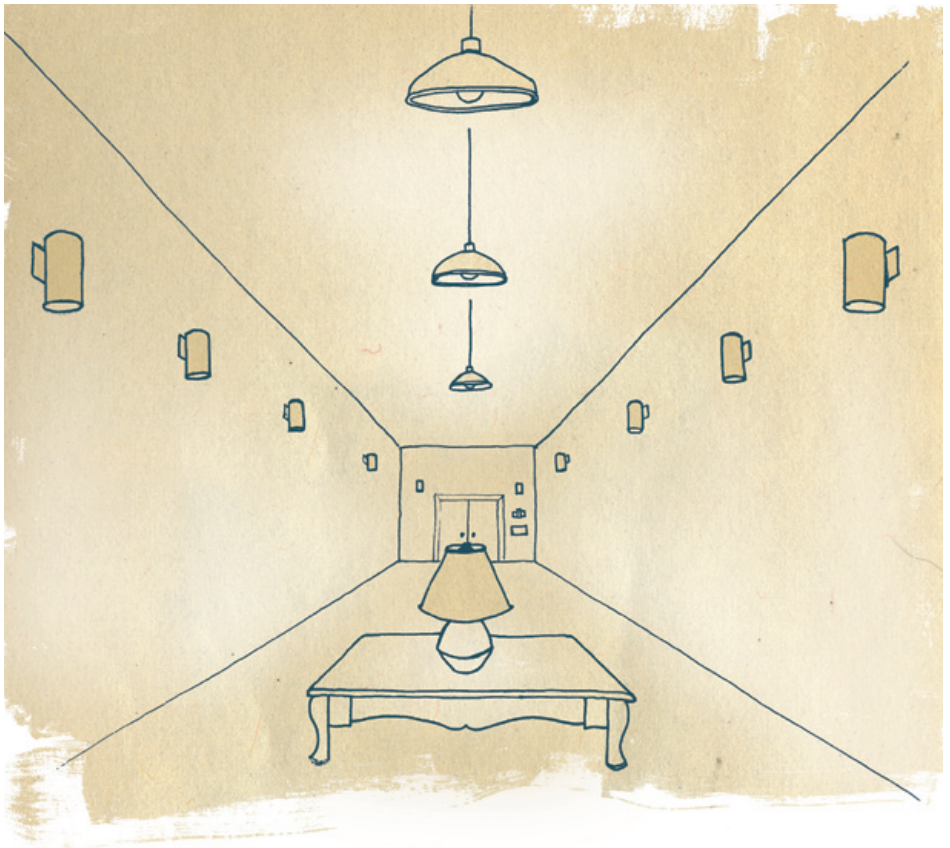
AFTER AUGUST

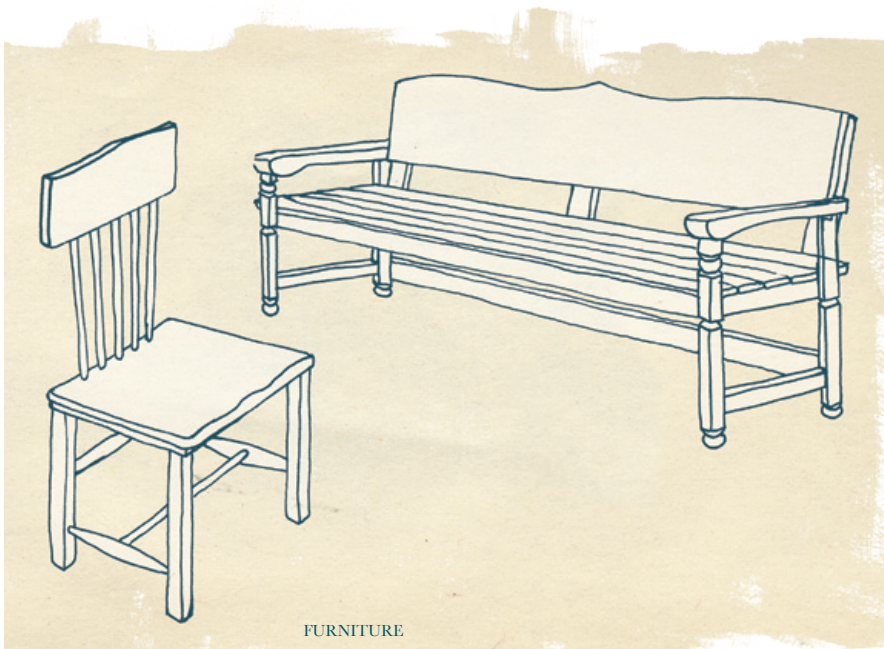
Exhibition Building

PHYSICALITY

LIGHTING

With the exception of the reception and entrance areas, the rooms of the building are relatively low-lit. Highly contrasting spots of light illuminate the content and museum signage, while the corners, floors, and ceilings remain dim. This keeps the stories in focus with few peripheral distractions. The lighting also contributes to the atmosphere in which the highly personal content is contributed and witnessed (see *Visitor Experience*).





FURNITURE

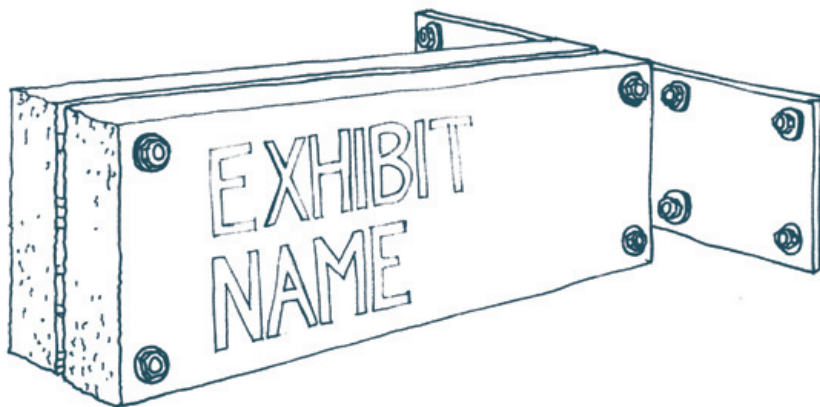
There are numerous pieces of traditional furnishings spread throughout the spaces. Whether they are purchased directly from secondhand stores, donated, or purchased to appear used, all the seats, tables, and shelving units have a past full of stories.

GRAPHIC PROGRAM

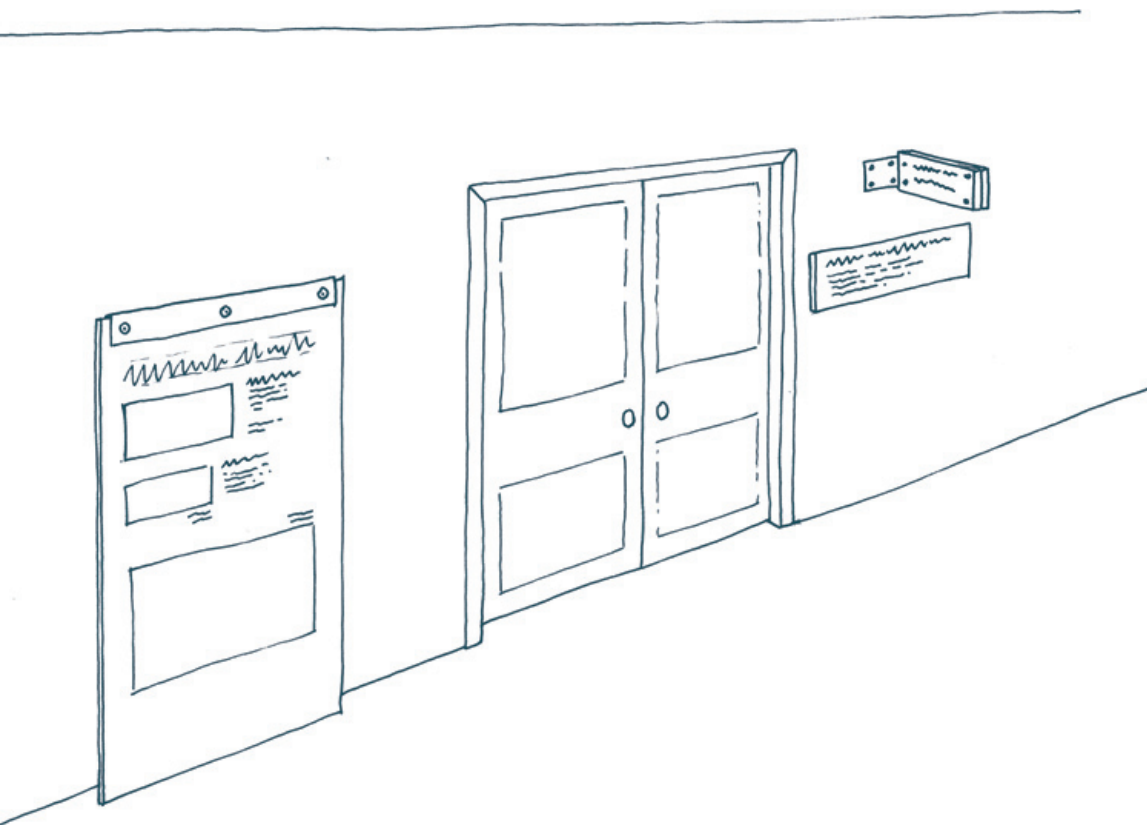
The content is organized according to visitors' placement of their contributions. Therefore, permanent graphics and signage are designed to be simple, structured, and clear.

TYPICALS

All signage is constructed with the materials described in previous pages (see *Physicality*).



Environmental graphics used to distinguish the separate areas of the building are composed of two pieces of thick plywood bolted onto a galvanized steel brace. Text will be screen printed onto the wood.



Display panels with wayfinding graphics or other information will be made of plywood. Graphics and type will most often be screen printed onto the board. In some cases, full-color vinyl graphics are applied to the wood.

Beside the door to each exhibit space there will be a horizontal panel explaining the exhibit and visitors' roles. The board is also plywood. It is set off the wall one inch by concealed steel framework. Subtle lighting built into the steel will light the wall behind.

COLOR

The colors chosen for all areas of the After August Museum are the same. However, they are used differently in each section according to the respective environment and atmosphere.

Light gray is used as a field in which type and graphics of the other two colors are used. Its lightness contrasts with the darker lighting of the exhibition building, and its neutrality makes it very versatile.

Pantone 7541 C

Dark green-blue is used in the exhibition to match the atmosphere of the space and the mood of the content. It is rich, cool-but-not-cold, and traditionally common to the New Orleans area.

Pantone 7541 C

This vivid orange is used to complement the green-blue and accent the raw materials of the exhibition building.

Pantone 145 C

TYPOGRAPHY

The same typographical system appears in all of the After August Museum. The colors of the type may vary according to the requirements of the space in which it appears.

In the low-lit environment of the exhibition building, typography will appear dark on lighter background colors.

Typefaces used:

Baskerville is a humanistic serif face that is very legible and has refined form.

Trade Gothic is a fixed-width sans serif face that is very structured and full of personality.

EXHIBIT TITLES	1A
EXHIBIT DESCRIPTIONS	1B
DISPLAY TITLES	2A
DISPLAY DESCRIPTIONS	2B
PANEL TITLE	3A
PANEL COPY	3B
CAPTION TITLE	4A
CAPTION COPY	4B
CONTRIBUTOR NAMES	4C

WE GO

to the convention
first thing I see is
bodies. We slept

IT WAS LIKE

It was like slavery days again. I
been through it, but that's what

OT

on center,
s six dead
outside.

HELL.

ain't never
it felt like.

1A

1B

2A

2B

AFTER AUGUST

Exhibition Building

GRAPHIC PROGRAM

**FOUR OF US, TWO
FEMALES, TWO MEN.**

Five days we're out there.

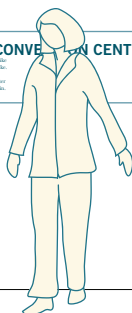
Everything. Fires to get
helicopters attention.

WHEN THEY CAME

and brought us water and food,
it was peaceful for a second.

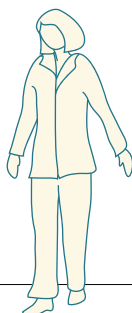
But then agitation stirred up again.

first thing I see is six dead bodies. We slept outside. It was Hell. It was like slavery days again. I ain't never been through it, but that's the way it felt like. Four of us, two females, to men. Five days we're out there. Everything. Fires to get helicopters' attention. When they came and brought us water and food, it was peaceful for a second. But then agitation stirred up again.



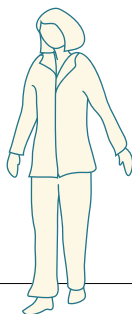
1

WHEN WE GOT TO THE CONVENTION CENTER

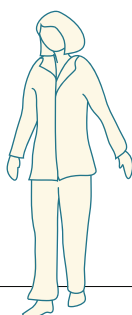


2

WHEN WE GOT TO THE CONVENTION CENTER



3



4

Here they are. The kinds of secrets and stories that seldom find their way into conversation. And they are all here, out in the open, for any passing eye to find and connect with. So many sullen souls breathed out onto sheets of paper and blackboard, scattered along this old house's wooden ribs, like the wallpaper of its heart.

In the center of the room, an old wooden table waits, a kind doorman. When I walked into the room, through the quiet, heavy double doors, a slender woman sat in a chair with her lap beneath the old table. She leaned over a sheet of blank paper with a small marker. Upon my entering, she briefly lifted her face. Quickly back to her page, her story. Through the low light, I posed no threat

to her private time with words and ink and memory. She is now standing in front of the wall opposite the room from my wall, where I am scratching, with a stick of yellow chalk, my recounts of that day in August and the angry sound of wind in darkness.

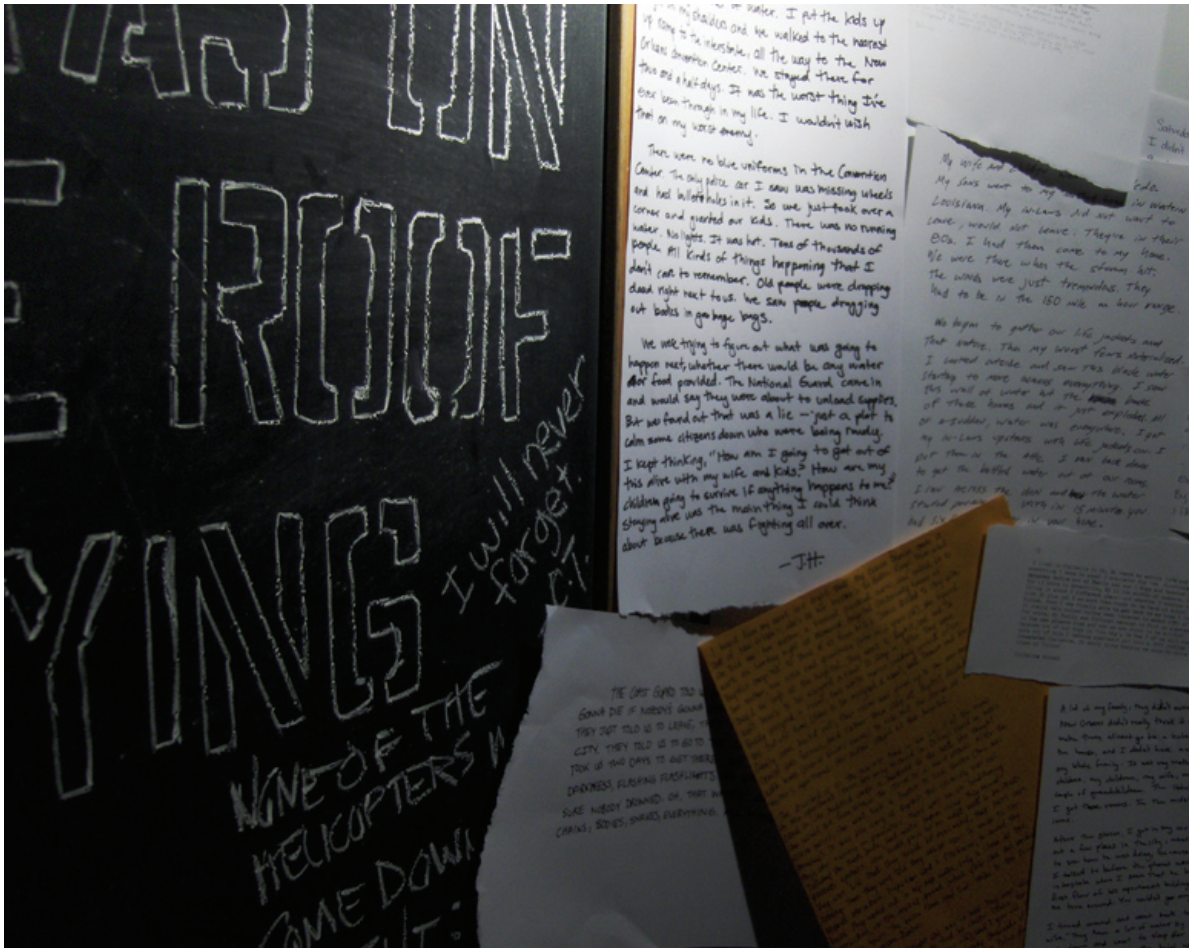
The woman placed her page just below her shoulders, near a corner, to the right of a typewritten list of things someone lost to the risen waters.

I write, letter by letter, my quick memory and notice the way chalk dust smells, the way the slide of my tennis shoes sounds on hardwood.

Finished, I noticed that someone has lightly drawn in pencil the face of a loved one and their unforgotten name.







Demonstration of what a section of this exhibit space might look like.

SPACE: MEMORY WALLS

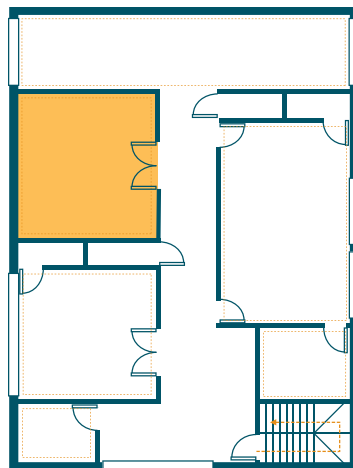
The Memory Walls exhibit is a collection of contributed stories taking written forms.

In the center of the room, several chairs surround a large wooden table. The table is spotted with different forms of writing media: markers, pens, pencils, chalk, stencils, and a typewriter. Visitors to the space are invited to use these utensils to express their memories of experiencing Hurricane Katrina. Visitors are free to decide both the shape their story takes on the wall and how it will hang. There are available several sizes and sorts of paper that, when applied to the space, create textures of light and shadow, material and color, and text and space.

Every inch of the single room's four walls is available for the presentation of visitors' stories. One wall is entirely cork pin-up space; another is covered with a chalkboard surface. On the table with the writing supplies, there are thumbtacks and adhesive strips for the hanging of pages.

As with most of the other rooms in the building, this room is relatively dim in lighting except on the table's surface and the walls. The walls are lit from above, creating a dramatic texture on walls scaled with pages of stories.

Periodic documentation keeps these stories archived as they become too deep on the walls and must be taken down to allow space for new stories.



Location of Memory Walls on first floor of exhibition building

AFTER AUGUST

Exhibition Building

MEMORY WALLS

This room is a chest, full of keepsakes not kept, but given to a story. The story collects on the wooden walls of this room, on shelves and hangers. The story has characters, actors whose wardrobes collect on them as they stand stationary throughout the room. The story has many narrators and varying plots but their setting is the same. Rising seas, thrashing winds, lost homes, and vanished lives.

These stationary actors, draped with necklaces and hats and dressed in shirts and skirts, are collections themselves. They are eclectic mannequins, personality not withheld. They are where we visitors can hang our memories, where we honor our recollections of the many ways life used to be.

The shelves, the walls, are spot-lit with knickknacks and objects: a porcelain sparrow perches atop a yellow rose with pink tips, an orange teddy bear stares plastic-eyed across the room, a hammer displays the initials of its old owner, a tarnished nautical compass laments the loss of its vessel, a white plate hangs on the wall faced with the painting of a cardinal, an old black-and-white photo of a racing hound stands old and proud.

I stand in the middle of the room and listen to the audio of voices coming from the ceiling above me. A young man finishes explaining that the orange teddy bear belonged to both himself and his older brother, that it represents both the many things shared and the many things they would no longer. A woman with a fragile voice begins to speak of the bird-painted plates her mother left her before she died.







■
*Demonstration of what an
area of the exhibit space
might look like.*



AFTER AUGUST

Exhibition Building

MEANING OF THINGS

SPACE: MEANING OF THINGS

In every culture objects take on different meaning. In American culture, as in many others, these artifacts often carry meanings that are arbitrary, or unrelated to the true intentions of the object's maker. *The Meaning of Things* exhibit is home for these sorts of personal meanings and the objects that have been invested with them.

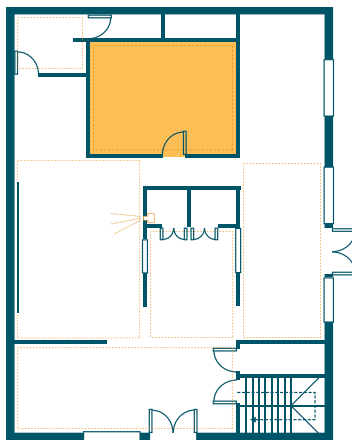
Two opposing walls of the exhibit room are covered with shelf space where visitors are invited to place donated objects that are related to their experiences with Hurricane Katrina. They can remind of times before Katrina's arrival, point back to a specific event during Katrina, represent a large loss, or any other situation.

Many survivors of the storm suffered losses that go beyond material possessions or convenience. The loss of human presence, whether through tragedy that occurred during Katrina or through the displacement of the area's residents after the storm, is a common lament of members of the Lower Ninth Ward.

A small way of therapeutically telling the world of them and honoring their past presence, visitors may leave behind symbols of those who were once in their lives. These little reminders are added to mannequin-like figures that have been constructed from donated supplies of local clothing boutiques and jewelry stores.

After a visitor has contributed an object to the *Meaning of Things* space, they are given the option of leaving an accompanying audio recording of their explanation of the significance of their object. Their story, along with the stories of all the other contributors to the space, will be played in the exhibit space.

Upon entering the exhibit's doors, visitors can follow the stories' audio playback around the room as they search for the object to which each story belongs.



Location of Meaning of Things on first floor of exhibition building

My wife and children went to Toledo.
My sons went to my mother's home in Western
Louisiana. My in-laws did not want to
leave, would not leave. They're in their
80s. I had them come to my home.

We were
the wind
had to

We began
That was

I looked
starting
this was
of the
of a so
my in-
put the



hit.
They
our range.

gets and
s materialized
black water
y. I saw
back
exploded. All
here. I got
buckets on. I
back down

to get the bottled water out of our rooms.
I ran across the den and ~~and~~ the water
started pouring in. Within 15 minutes you
saw water in your home.