

# Katrina



Growing up in New Orleans, I have been in the eye of a hurricane a dozen times in my life. In fact, Hurricane Betsy struck on my 12th birthday, September 9, 1965. We blew out the candles and quickly re-lighted them to see in the dark. The eye of a hurricane provides a few brief moments of absolute calm in the midst of devastation – barely enough time to tighten a loose rope or nail plywood over a broken window. The eye is a peculiar natural phenomenon. I remember absolute stillness, change in barometric pressure, heavy humidity, strange opaque light for daytime hurricanes, and pitch blackness for hurricanes at night. I remember glaring at the absence of our fence, garage, roof, trees, and windows after the hurricane passed. Our basketball goal smashed into the rear window of Mr. Rainwater’s car during one hurricane! In my mind’s eye, I still see the brick chimney on top of the new car, shingles from distant homes deeply embedded in our house, debris piled high in the yard, shattered windows and broken glass everywhere, tangles of electric wires and trees toppled in the street. After Katrina, I could see the water rising on the television reports. The eye of a hurricane provides a brief moment of silence in a space between calm and violence, life and death. I have painted a canvas of memories for each hurricane in Louisiana. Katrina, perhaps, embodies the emotions of them all.

60” x 24” oil on canvas