

Nature of the City

New Drawings, Constructions and Sewn Works

by **Hannah Chalew**

July 29th - August 27th, 2013

Opening Reception - **Saturday, August 3rd, 6-9 pm**
in conjunction with *Whitney White Linen Light*



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jonathan Ferrara Gallery is proud to announce *Nature of the City*, a solo exhibition of **New Drawings, Constructions and Sewn Works** by artist **Hannah Chalew**. Chalew's second solo exhibition at the gallery, *Nature of the City* will be on view from July 29th - August 27th, opening with an artist's reception on **Saturday, August 3rd, 6-9 pm**, in conjunction with *Whitney White Linen Light* that draws over 50,000 art lovers to Julia Street and the New Orleans Arts District.

Chalew, a New Orleans native, works from direct observation to capture the phenomena of dilapidation and re-growth occurring in the post-Katrina landscape, where abandoned structures that have fallen into the backdrop of the city's psyche are slowly being reclaimed by nature. **This phenomena is not particular to just New Orleans...the American urban landscape is rife with nature's formidable reclamation.** Chalew's meticulous draftsmanship scales several media including drawing, sewn works, and multimedia constructions. She uses thread to mimic the overgrowth of creeping vines, creating sewn drawings that transmit a sense of destruction and abandonment along with lush new life.

Nature of the City will also feature the debut of a new site-specific installation of reconstructed furniture titled *Living Room*, in which the artist has re-outfitted functional chairs, a couch, a lamp and a rug using live plants. This installation, which repurposes voided materials for its base, speaks to the ways that destruction and regrowth affect our private lives in a domestic rather than industrial sense. Following this exhibition, the *Living Room* installation is scheduled to be shown at the Texas Contemporary art fair in October and Miami Project art fair as part of Art:Basel Miami in early December.

The artist writes of this body of work:

By their nature, cities vacillate between entropy and order as populations come and go; prosper and sputter. New Orleans, a city that was carved out of the swamp, always has the jungle at its doorstep, waiting for a few weeks of lapsed human vigilance to gain a foothold; these urban fluctuations become a battle between man and nature.

"Nature of the City" explores this ebb and flow by examining the human spaces in the urban fabric that have been neglected. Abandoned structures undergo a slow transformation as they are recolonized by new ecosystems that are growing over the shapes of civilization like a kind of natural amnesia. I work from direct observation to create records of these spaces that are always in a state of becoming – marking the history of the place at this moment in time and also capturing the beauty and power of nature and its ability to flourish where people cannot. The sites I explore in my work are so remarkable yet so ubiquitous in New Orleans that they fall into the backdrop of our city and our psyches as we move through it.

This body of work ranges from drawings on the wall to constructions in space that all utilize a flatness even as they move into the third dimension. They also have a palpable sense of negative space that evokes the role of these peripheral spaces in our ever-fluctuating city – the loss and the possibility for change they represent.

In this body of work I use simple, fragile domestic materials like paper, wallpaper, and thread, with structures of wood and wire that mimic the built environment and reference the fragility of the human presence in New Orleans. Often overlooked, these environments become statements about the ever-evolving life of the city as it shifts between civilized and wild; chaos and rule; the past, the present, and inevitably the future.

Hannah Chalew is an artist born and raised in New Orleans who, after graduating from Brandeis University with a B.A. in the Fine Arts, made the choice to return to her hometown and add her voice to the burgeoning art scene. She is one of the founders of T-Lot, a studio and installation space for emerging artists in the St. Claude Arts District. Her work has been featured in *Art Voices*, *The Oxford American*, *Pelican Bomb*, *Satellite Magazine*, *Designtripper*, *NOLA Defender*, and the *Times-Picayune*, where she was called "one of New Orleans' rising art stars".

Chalew has exhibited work at Octavia Gallery, the Acadiana Center for the Arts, T-Lot, and the Contemporary Arts Center, among numerous others. Her work was included in the exhibition *Art/Sewn* at the Asheville Art Museum in early 2013. In Autumn 2013, Chalew will be featured at the Bedford Gallery in Walnut Creek, CA in an exhibition entitled *Home: Shelter and Habitat in Contemporary Art*.

Hannah Chalew lives and works in New Orleans and is represented by Jonathan Ferrara Gallery.

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