

Exhibit Showcases "Vestiges" and City's Artists

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Alicia Duplessis aduples@tulane.edu

"LOSS. RITUAL. RELIC. Residue: The Archive" opens on Saturday (Nov.1) at the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women. The exhibit showcases artists who "merge their lives with their artmaking rituals and tools," says Jan Gilbert, artist and curator for the show.



Fish totems created by artist Peggy Bishop adorn light poles in front of Caroline Richardson Hall, home of the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women. (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The exhibit at the center, located on the uptown campus of Tulane University, is part of the 25th anniversary commemoration of "[The VESTIGES Project,](#)" co-founded by Gilbert in 1984 as a forum for artists and writers to collaboratively investigate the interconnection of image and text and the culture of New Orleans.

"All of the artists and writers are from New Orleans or have lived here substantially," says Gilbert, who also serves as archivist for the project. "Once we recognized that we all had a shared aesthetic that was peculiar to New Orleans, we decided that 'vestiges' would be the best way to describe it." Gilbert earned a master of fine arts from Tulane in 1982.

In preparation for the installation of "LOSS. RITUAL. RELIC. Residue," the walls of the [Nadine Vorhoff Library and Newcomb Archives](#) at the Center for Research on Women were cleared of previously hung art to make room for the four-month exhibition that presents a look into the artists' methodologies and offers art that will intrigue even the youngest of critics.

"Much of the show is playful. Kids and elders can appreciate it," says Gilbert. "There are elements of healing, elements of appreciating the city, elements of collaboration and a lot of different themes that I hope are universal."

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Gilbert's contribution to the exhibit includes an archival presentation that walks visitors through the history of "The VESTIGES Project," presenting works from previous shows and a timeline of participating artists and writers.

Gilbert's work *Masters of Their Conditions*, a conceptual piece of items flooded, yet still recognizable, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina also is included in the exhibit.



Peggy Bishop's colorful ceramic bird decorations on the Tulane uptown campus are part of "LOSS. RITUAL. RELIC. Residue," an "unofficial" Prospect.1 New Orleans exhibit.

"Even though we look back with 'VESTIGES,' the idea is very forward thinking," says Gilbert. "We embrace the past and use that to go forward."

A work, *Photovella!*, by Debra Howell invites visitors to become part of the art as they select three items representative of people, passages and places from a glass curio cabinet.

The visitors are asked to write short paragraphs telling stories involving the items that they've selected. A book in which visitors may write sits beside the case displaying the items.

Other artists whose work will be exhibited are Jackie Brenner, Charlie Bishop, Angela Driscoll, Danella Primeaux Hero, Sharon Jacques, Jennifer Odem, Kristen Struebing-Beazley, Michel Varisco, Margaret Witherspoon and Michele White. Writers involved include Carolyn Maisel, Andrei Codrescu, Yusef Komunyakaa and many more.

"LOSS. RITUAL. RELIC. Residue: The Archive" is free and open to the public. The exhibit at the Newcomb Center for Research on Women located in Caroline Richardson Hall will run through Feb. 28 from 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays; 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays; 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. on Saturdays and noon until 4 p.m. on Sundays. The exhibit is closed on holidays.

"The VESTIGES Project" is currently in a three-year residency at the New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center, a co-sponsor of the exhibition. "LOSS. RITUAL. RELIC." is a parallel activity of [Prospect.1 New Orleans](#), the citywide international art biennial that also opens this weekend.