

Michael Aldana

Artist Statement

Recently my art works have been attempts to grapple with the issue of coastal erosion in South Louisiana. Louisiana is losing land at a rate of a football field every 35 minutes. This is primarily due to the erosion happening along the coast as oil and gas companies have dug canals in their exploration of this oil rich region. The salt water moves in the manmade canals and destroys the wetlands further inland, causing vegetation to die, and in turn, causing the land to erode. Before Katrina, I hadn't thought much about the prospects of losing the land and the culture with which I grew up. After being a part of Katrina's and her aftermath, I see just how serious the issue is, and my work since has been aimed at bringing Louisiana's plight to light.

My art is a way for me to express what is happening as the erosion process threatens Louisiana. I look back, in my art, at a past that has vanished or is currently in the process of vanishing. I reference landmarks or landscapes mixed with personal experiences of my youth as reminders of what was, juxtaposed with landscapes of wetlands or canals that are the current cause of the problem. In the works I layer in images, sand them away, layer new images and often create a space that confounds normal scale and perspective as an attempt to relay the chaos that is facing this region and as an attempt to search for some personal sense out of it all. In the process of making these pieces I contort the composition and reorganize reality with a conglomeration of images. I see these as a reorganization and reclamation of space. It is an effort, at least in art form, to take back the lands, industries, lexicons and places I used to know that are disappearing, and reclaiming them as new spaces. It is a personal way to look at what is being lost due to the problem of erosion and reinventing a space where the past comes back to life and affronts the land loss. There are other portions of this series where I focus on one place, person or thing that is vanishing, leaving or no longer exists as a meditational homage. Painting a crawfish hole or a bridge becomes more than painting a crawfish hole or a bridge, it becomes a deeper thought process into family, loss, and an uncertain future. The work becomes a reconnection to the past and a way to deal with the immense issues facing Louisiana in particular New Orleans.