



Richard Misrach: Destroy This Memory

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The photographs in Richard Misrach's "Destroy This Memory" are a stark, affecting reminder of the physical and psychological impact of Hurricane Katrina as told by those on the ground, and seen through the lens of a contemporary master. Rather than simply surveying the damage, Misrach--who has photographed the region regularly since the 1970s, most notably for his ongoing "Cancer Alley" project--found himself drawn to the hurricane-inspired graffiti: messages scrawled in spray paint, crayons, chalk or whatever materials residents and rescue workers happened to have on hand. At turns threatening, desperate, clinical and even darkly humorous, the phrases he captures--the only text that appears in the book--offer revealing and unique human perspectives on the devastation and shock left in the wake of this disaster. "Destroy This Memory" presents previously unpublished and starkly compelling material, all of which Misrach shot with his 4 MP pocket camera while also working on a separate archive of over 1,000 photographs with his 8 x 10 large-format camera. Created between October and December 2005, this series of images serves as a potent, unalloyed document of the raw experiences of those left to fend for themselves in the aftermath of Katrina. With no essay, titles or even page numbers in the way, the words on these homes, cars and trees offer a searing testament that continues to speak volumes, five years after their original inscription.

Richard Misrach (born 1949) is credited with helping to pioneer the renaissance of color photography and large-scale presentation in the 1970s. He has exhibited extensively, and his work is held in the permanent collections of prestigious institutions such as The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Art Institute of Chicago.

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