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AFTER THE FLOOD

ONE BLOCK: A NEW ORLEANS NEIGHBORHOOD REBUILDS

BY DAVE ANDERSON

Photographer Dave Anderson selected a single block in the Holy Cross neighborhood of the Lower Ninth Ward to photograph over a two year period. In his new book, *One Block*, the earliest photos were taken in 2007, at a time when many of the block's residents were still living in FEMA trailers but were already immersed in the work of gutting and restoring their houses—sometimes from the foundation up.

As in his previous book *Rough Beauty*, about the residents of Vidor, Texas, Anderson evokes a sense of place and the rhythms of ordinary life through portraits, interiors and small vignettes. We see a still life of used paint trays on the floor of an empty room; a ceiling fan dangling in a room where the walls and ceiling have been stripped to its studs; a hammer left on the pitch of a roof that's being reshingled; a young boy standing on his porch in the golden light of twilight, his shadow looming on the wall behind him. Anderson is also interested in human interaction,



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and he shows neighbors on the block talking over their fences or chatting on a front porch. In one spread, we see a group of women, white and black, escort one of the block's matriarchs, Doris Cefala, as she returns on her walker to see her old home. "The sight of her former home always makes Doris cry," Anderson writes.

One Block depicts lots of people sanding, planing, hammering and electric sawing. But as New Orleans columnist and author Chris Rose says in his mordantly funny introduction, "home improvement" has a different spin when it's undertaken not to get more closet space but "because your neighborhood was wiped off the map." As Rose notes, this book is not "This Old House." But Anderson's remarkable before and after photos show that all that hard work has paid off: The homes have been restored in a way that fits their historic detail and unique charm.

At the end of this month, the Og-



A resident of New Orleans's Holy Cross neighborhood in the Lower Ninth Ward at work rebuilding his home; in his book *One Block*, photographer Dave Anderson (pictured) focuses on several Holy Cross residents' efforts to restore their houses following the hurricane.

den Museum in New Orleans will open an exhibit of the work. The day before, the block Anderson photographed will be the scene of a big block party co-hosted by Aperture and *Oxford American* magazine. It's sure to be a celebration of the residents' resourcefulness and determination to regain what once seemed all but lost.

One Block

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www.aperture.org

One Block Exhibition
Through August 20
ClampART Gallery
521-531 W. 25th Street
New York, NY 10001
www.clampart.com

Ogden Museum of Southern Art
Opening August 30
925 Camp Street
New Orleans, LA 70130
www.ogdenmuseum.org