“Message In a Bottle: Reconstructing Lives” is the result of a photography and social studies project for photography and film students in Charlotte, NC (Myers Park, Harding University and Providence High School) and New Orleans, LA (Warren Easton, Benjamin Franklin and NOCCA). The project and exhibition were organized by the education department of The Light Factory (Charlotte, NC) a non-profit arts center dedicated to exhibition and education programs promoting the power of photography and film. The goal of the project was to give students an opportunity to share their own thoughts and feelings about the Hurricane Katrina disaster. The exhibition features student work created in New Orleans and Charlotte.

Since September 2006, photography and film students at these Charlotte and New Orleans high schools have had guest lecturers and artists visit to discuss and study Katrina, her effects, and the power of the image. In February 2007, The Light Factory’s education staff traveled 36 Charlotte high school students to New Orleans so they could meet their New Orleans peers and see firsthand the effects of Hurricane Katrina. The students were in New Orleans for five days where they worked with over 30 New Orleans students, talking to them about their experiences with the Hurricane and seeing their devastated homes. The students from Charlotte and New Orleans toured and created images of destroyed areas of the city including 9th Ward and Lakeview. The Charlotte students also volunteered to help with storm clean-up.

“Message in a Bottle: Reconstructing Lives” is also a response to Artifacts of Remembrance, an exhibit held at The Light Factory featuring photographic art illustrating the physical remains and evidence of tragedies created by natural disasters and war around the world.

For this exhibition, the students in Charlotte and New Orleans were asked to respond to recent events relating to Hurricane Katrina using personal and unique photographic and video art. The students from each area found bottles and used these bottles as containers for creatively expressing a “call for help.” The students used different processes for integrating the images with the bottles from placing or hanging images in the bottles to using gel medium to transfer the images to the bottles. The final results are beautiful and poignant sculptures expressing each student’s experience with the Hurricane.

The Light Factory would like to acknowledge the participating guest lecturers and teaching artist. These included: Dr. James Hogue, history professor at UNC-Charlotte; Dr. Dan Grano, mass communications professor at UNC-Charlotte; Keith and Becky Partin, Red Cross volunteers; Jen Crickenberger, The Light Factory’s Assistant Education Director as the curator and photography teaching artist; and Dorne Pentes, The Light Factory’s film teaching artist. Fine art photographer, Carl Bergman instructed the New Orleans students.
Guilford College and The Light Factory would also like to thank the sponsors: Stinson Charters & Charleston House Restaurant

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