



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Alexandra Irvine, 409.763.2403  
[alex@galvestonartscenter.org](mailto:alex@galvestonartscenter.org)

# GALVESTON ARTS CENTER SUFFERS SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE FROM HURRICANE IKE

---

GALVESTON, Texas, November 1, 2008—Located on the corner of The Strand and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, the Galveston Arts Center has served as the hub of the island's visual arts community for the past 40 years. Now its home, the 1878 First National Bank Building, can add Hurricane Ike to the list of hurricanes it has survived—a list that includes Hurricane Carla in 1961 and the infamous Great Storm of 1900.

GAC suffered extensive damage from flooding caused when Ike's storm surge pushed more than 4 feet of water into the facilities, ruining art, shop inventory, and everything else that was submerged in the murky water. Last spring, GAC had begun the first phase of what will eventually be a total renovation and restoration of the 130-year-old building, addressing the increasingly failing masonry foundation and deteriorating cast iron façade. Just weeks prior to the storm, scaffolding had been installed to support the entire structural load of the building. A post-hurricane assessment of the building by preservation specialists confirmed that, without the repairs completed during the past six months, GAC most likely would have collapsed from the strong winds and the pressure that the flood water exerted on the structure.

While the current situation has forced the staff and board of directors to reprioritize the order in which restoration needs are met, it is evident that all those involved remain committed not only to the Arts Center, but also to the Galveston community and the Strand historic district. "We estimate that it will take approximately 6 to 9 months and at least an additional \$500,000 to get the facility back to a state where we can re-open to the public," said GAC board president Michele Avery. "It won't be easy, especially since so many of us are dealing with loss or damage to our own homes or businesses, but the Arts Center has many friends and supporters across Texas. We want to let them know that we need their help in order to come back." The additional funds will be used to restore the downstairs interior walls and the electrical, plumbing and HVAC systems, and to add ADA-compliant restrooms and entryway.

GAC has received nearly \$1 million of grant funding over the past two years for the emergency stabilization and renovation of the building, including grants from the Save America's Treasures program, Houston Endowment, The Brown Foundation, and the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund. According to executive director Alexandra Irvine, those funds very likely saved the building during Hurricane Ike. "We are extremely grateful to everyone who made the emergency stabilization possible, including the many members of GAC and the Galveston community who responded to a call for donations last winter." In addition, the Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund recently awarded GAC \$10,000 in emergency relief funds.

—more—

2127 Strand | Galveston TX 77550 | 409.763.2403 | [www.galvestonartscenter.org](http://www.galvestonartscenter.org)

Celebrating 40 years of culture on the corner of Strand and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street in historic downtown Galveston!

A “pass the hat” fundraising event will be held at Lawndale Art Center in Houston on Thursday, December 11, 2008, from 5:30 to 7:30. The event will be hosted by the Art Guys (artists Jack Massing and Michael Galbreth) and will be free and open to the public. The exhibition **The Art Guys: Cloud Cuckoo Land, Selections from 25 Years of Drawings, Proposals, Failed Schemes and Pipe Dreams**, organized by GAC’s curator Clint Willour, will open at The Grace Museum in Abilene on Friday, December 12. The exhibition has been shown at venues in Victoria, Beaumont, Odessa and San Antonio following its Galveston premier in August 2007.

Prior to the storm, GAC had mounted an exhibition of the work of Fort Worth-based artist Helen Altman. Of the 38 works featured in the 10-year retrospective, 25 were completely destroyed, worth an estimated \$98,000. The exhibition, titled **Natural Concerns**, had been featured as a critic’s pick on [Artforum.com](http://Artforum.com). In addition, inventory from the ArtWorks museum shop was also destroyed. “We are facing lost revenue of approximately \$3,000 per month that the shop is not open,” notes Irvine. “That money is an important part of our operating budget and we depend on it to support our exhibition and education outreach programs.” A satellite shop sales location will be established at Hendley Market at 2010 Strand during Dickens on the Strand and the Lone Star Motorcycle Rally.

The Arts Center’s *Art for All* Education Outreach Program, which provides classes free of charge to local residents, will resume in January 2009. Through this initiative, GAC is able to promote the visual arts by taking GAC into the community in order to reach those who might not otherwise have access to programs exploring the creative process. Classes at locations including St. Vincent’s House, the Galveston County Senior Citizens’ Center, and the Resource and Crisis Center, among others, foster individual and community growth by encouraging adults and children alike to express themselves creatively. These activities assist in building self confidence and improve problem solving skills.

GAC plans to resume community-wide ArtWalk events in the spring, and will feature the first 30-year survey exhibition of glass and stone sculptures produced by Austin-based artist Damian Priour.

## **SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP**

Funding for GAC’s exhibition programs is provided by Houston Endowment, Inc., Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, The National Endowment for the Arts, Texas Commission on the Arts, the City of Galveston through the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund, Edward Randall Thompson, Jr. Memorial Fund, and the generous support of the community, volunteers and an active membership. The *Art for All* Education Outreach Program is supported in part by the Permanent Endowment Fund of Moody Memorial First United Methodist Church, The Smothers Foundation, Houston Endowment, Inc., Fondren Foundation, Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund, Alice Taylor Gray Foundation, Target, and Texas Commission on the Arts.

## **LOCATION AND HOURS**

Galveston Arts Center is located on the corner of Strand and 22<sup>nd</sup> (Kempner) Street in historic downtown Galveston. GAC is currently closed for repairs until further notice. For more information, call 409.763.2403 or visit [www.galvestonartscenter.org](http://www.galvestonartscenter.org).

###

2127 Strand | Galveston TX 77550 | 409.763.2403 | [www.galvestonartscenter.org](http://www.galvestonartscenter.org)

Celebrating 40 years of culture on the corner of Strand and 22<sup>nd</sup> Street in historic downtown Galveston!