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TUESDAY, JUNE 25, 2013

ART

### Review: *Chalmatia (shall-MAY-shuh): A Fictional Place Down the Road*

POSTED BY [D. ERIC BOOKHARDT](#) ON TUE, JUN 25, 2013 AT 3:21 PM

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Where is *Chalmatia*? Ask any Chalmatian, as the residents of a certain St. Bernard Parish city are sometimes known, and you may get an educated guess, but in this Contemporary Arts Center expo it's more like a state of mind. The work of Louisianian Daneeta Jackson and her Swedish expat partner Patrick Jackson, *Chalmatia* is a stream of consciousness, word-and-image narrative that depicts a fictionalized version of a familiar place. The artists' statement describes a fractured landscape of "broken strip malls, empty lots, and bare cement slabs that once supported a thriving community — a place largely defined by what's no longer there." Like the Louisiana town in Walker Percy's dystopian novel *Love in the Ruins*, things have fallen apart here. People get by on nostalgia or make believe as their lives assume mythic qualities.

In a written account, a resident describes a girl with a luminous hula hoop (pictured) amid a row of ruined townhouses. "When I saw her on the slab I thought I was imagining things again... She only comes out at night." Nearby, Carmella is fixing up Mr. Ralph's old place. Mr. Ralph drowned in the storm while saving his three dogs, but Carmella "prayed his soul right up to heaven." And then there's Destiny who, tired of playing in the ruins, went to work on Bourbon Street when she turned 18. Things are no longer dire in the real St. Bernard, and the Jacksons freely admit to taking poetic license. "Some of what you read in here is true," and other parts are "beautiful lies." But their stories, despite the local setting, have become more universal and it doesn't take much to read into *Chalmatia* the fate of places like Staten Island or other New York suburbs after Hurricane Sandy, or El Reno, Oklahoma, in the wake of the tornado. We live in a land increasingly made up of survivors with their own tales to tell.

Through Sept. 8

*Chalmatia (shall-MAY-shuh): A Fictional Place Down the Road*: Mixed media by Daneeta and Patrick Jackson  
[Contemporary Arts Center](#), 900 Camp St., (504) 528-3805

Tags: [Chalmatia](#), [Daneeta Jackson](#), [Patrick Jackson](#), [Contemporary Arts Center](#), [Image](#)

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