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August 5, 2010

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## Before and After the oil spill *Shifting* by Michel Varisco

Lafayette, LA- Clearly depicting the epicenter of oil cleanup operations in the Gulf of Mexico where toy-like boats are sprinkled on a horizon of oil stretching for miles, are the images of *Shifting* by Michel Varisco. This remarkable series of photographs focuses on Louisiana wetlands, swamps, barrier islands, and the catastrophic Gulf Coast oil spill. The exhibit will open to the public on August 14 at 6p.m., at the Acadiana Center for the Arts.

*Shifting* centers on the beauty and complexity of the wetlands of the Gulf Coast region, what at first seems like an abstract pattern of grasses and water upon closer view reveals a dying cypress forest where the marsh is disintegrating. Michel hopes to inspire the audience to feel invested in the fate of this area and empowered to act in whatever ways they can, since the wetlands otherwise have little of no voice.

Varisco explains, "When left untouched, the marshes and swamps grow, shift, move and die according to the movements of the sediments, the winds and the presence of salt, fresh, or brackish waters. The land is a living organism that's dynamic, much like the cells in our bodies, replacing what's lost as it can, unless the process is interrupted dramatically. As an artist I'm watching the accelerated shifting of this endangered land, sped up more so by the effects of the BP oil disaster."

Michel Varisco is a native New Orleans artist. Working in photography, assemblage and site-specific installation exploring change, loss and regeneration. Varisco's work is included in public, private and corporate collections in the United States and abroad. The SURDNA Foundation has provided major support for this project along with grants from the Louisiana Division of the Arts and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

Prior to the oil spill, Varisco exhibited the earlier part of her series in New Orleans, Alabama and Atlanta. A large-scale exhibition was being planned for midyear of 2011 at the AcA but due to the intense threat to the region, the museum has asked that she now show in August of 2010. The installation is slated to travel to New York to be included in

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*The Least We Can Do*, an exhibition, curated by Robin Wallis Atkinson, which explores the ways in which 15 artists from Southern Louisiana have engaged, critiqued, and confronted the Gulf Coast Oil Crisis and its surrounding issues. *The Least We Can Do* is scheduled to go on exhibition at Whitebox Gallery in New York in January 2011.

For more information on this artist please visit [www.michelvarisco.com](http://www.michelvarisco.com).

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