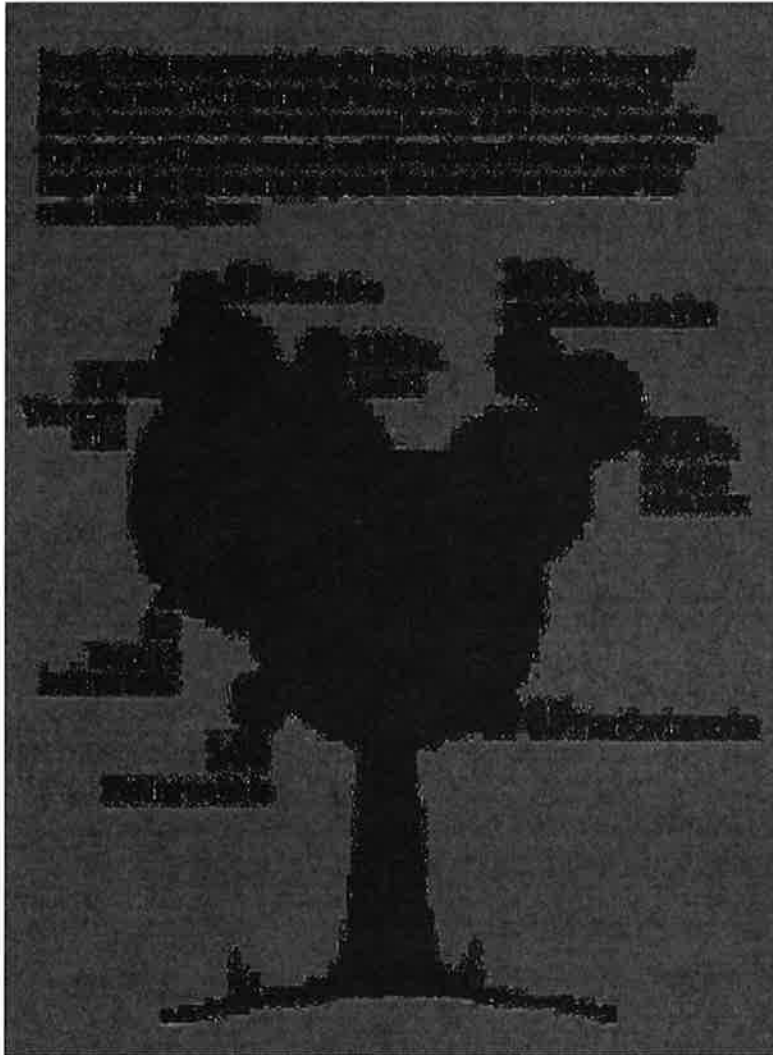


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A Forest for the Trees

By Lizzie Simon



When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, the winds demolished a small forest of century-old pine trees at the family home of Obie Award-winning theater artist Lisa D'Amour, in Covington, La. From the loss, though, an altogether different kind of seed was planted—the one for “How to Build a Forest,” a daily eight-hour performance piece in which an artificial environment is built—and taken down—each day within the 30-by-40-by-20-foot black-box theater at the Kitchen on West 19th Street.

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Ms. D'Amour created the piece with her PearlD'Amour collaborator, Katie Pearl, as well as the visual artist Shawn Hall, two sound designers, two lighting designers, 11 builders and three “rangers” who orientate audience members to the forest. Gallerygoers will be encouraged to build right along with the artists. While nothing, including “How to Build a Forest,” can replace the fallen trees of her youth, Ms. D'Amour said she's gained “a widening of

perspective about how my family is connected to the larger ecosystem” through working on the piece. The show is a totem to impermanence, and a monument to “the focus, bravery and care it takes to make something” that then really goes away.

She advised New Yorkers to forget their “rushed time tables” in order to get the most out of the performance. “The most boring way to see the piece is to come at 8:30 [when it's complete],” she said. “The installation is beautiful, don't get me wrong, but the best way to experience it is to watch it materialize.”

“How to Build a Forest” is free and will have its world premiere Friday through Sunday from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the Kitchen.