

# KATY BEH

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elle decor goes to



St. Louis Cathedral and Jackson Square, in the heart of the French Quarter.

## New Orleans

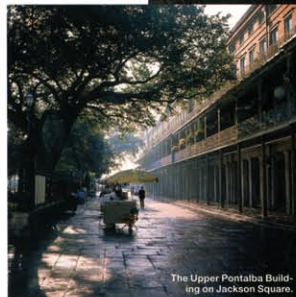
The winds blew and the waters rose, but Hurricane Katrina couldn't keep a great city down. The Big Easy is coming back

By Mimi Read

The poet Wallace Stevens once wrote, "Death is the mother of beauty." New Orleans, on the other hand, is busy illustrating the corollary that near-death produces its own miracles. From hanging gardens that spill over the iron-lace balconies in the French Quarter to dozens of first-rate restaurants packed with carousing diners, the Big Easy is experiencing a moment of heightened loveliness and pleasure.

In the two years since Hurricane Katrina, the city's sense of tragedy and fatalism has intensified, but so has its dark humor. This humid spot at the mouth of the Mississippi still looks and feels like a French-African colony under a fierce subtropical sun, with endless blocks of bright Creole cottages framed by palm fronds and banana trees. But just pick up the satirical new weekly called *The New Orleans Levee* and read its mirthful motto: We don't hold anything back. Hilarity laced with pain and resilience is an emotional cocktail too strong for some former residents, who have fled to drier places. As an out-of-towner murmured to his wife recently during a tour of stricken neighborhoods, "Peonia is looking better and better all the time, honey."

But others have joined the party in this low-lying, hurricane-plagued city, founded in 1718 by Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne, Sieur de Bienville, >



Elegant antiques at Karla Katz.

The Upper Pontalba Building on Jackson Square.

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"Magazine Street, an exuberant shopping district that winds along the river for six miles, runs the gamut from wine boutiques to wino bars. Fashionable antiques, clothing and home-furnishing shops sit next to humble places like Edward's Show Service, its façade festooned with Mardi Gras beads, Spanish moss, wooden lasts, and signs that may someday be hung as folk art: I WILL HEEL YOU. I WILL SAVE YOUR SOLE. I WILL EVEN DYE FOR YOU.

Next door to the shoe repair, Katy Beh, a chic Rhode Island School of Design grad, sells beautiful, artist-made jewelry in the store that bears her name."

### Where to Shop

**A Gallery for Fine Photography**, 241 Chartres St., 568-1313; agallery.com: More than 5,000 snapshots spanning the history of the medium.

**Aidan Gill for Men**, 2026 Magazine St., 587-9090; aidangillformen.com: An old-time barbershop with upscale potions.

**Ballin's Ltd.**, 721 Dante St., 866-4367; ballinsltd.com: Chic summer skirts, pretty sandals, and perfect T-shirts.

**Bush Antiques**, 2109 Magazine St., 581-3518; bushantiques.com: Antiques with an elegantly decadent attitude.

**Empire Antiques**, 3617 Magazine St., 897-0252; empireantiques.net: Spanish iron chandeliers, French armoires, and Italian painted commodes.

**Faulkner House Books**, 624 Pirate's Alley, 524-2940; faulknerhousebooks.net: Southern writers are a specialty.

**Karla Katz**, 4017 Magazine St., 897-0061; karlakatzandco.1stdibs.com: French and Italian relics and more.

**Katy Beh Contemporary Jewelry**, 3708 Magazine St., 896-9600; katybeh.com: Artist-made adornments, many with unusual gemstones and lustrous pearls.