

# EXITIUM

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By Surpik Angelini  
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Maria Cristina “Cristy” Jadick has lived most of her life in Houston as an artist and homemaker. For twenty years her work has exposed social inequities and tragic historical events, from the unjustified sacrifice of American recruits serving in the Gulf Wars, to the urban displacement, exile and homelessness brought upon by post war trauma, indigence, immigration, unemployment and extreme weather. Social wounds such as these, find expression in Jadick’s conceptual, multimedia art installations. She prints, draws, collages, stitches, weaves, bandages, skillfully assembling charged testimonial objects, poignant images, words and signs, all of which contextualize an explosive, evocative, visual narrative.

The title of Jadick’s exhibition EXITIUM, refers to the edge of DESTRUCTION or extinction. Bringing to light the complexity and deadly effects of extreme weather, the artist’s works stand as a powerful contestation to the currently disputed phenomena of “Climate Change.” Exitium is a multi-layered installation capturing Jadick’s all encompassing vision, dealing with the impact of historical events on intimate life at home. In the main gallery, a stark scene titled Furious Flow, Drought and Fire denounces the aftermath of catastrophic climatic events devastating huge expanses of forests, populated regions and wildlife throughout the United States. Thus, while the artist’s somber painting depicts festering black waters evoking Hurricanes Katrina, Harvey and Sandy’s epic flooding in the Gulf, and East Coast, a desiccated tree branch resting on a circle of scorched soil points to the severe drought and ravaging wild fires in the West Coast. These opposite disasters are like two “death sentences” punctuated by the sound of rushing water on one side and of crackling fire on the other end of the installation. Stacked against the wall and strewn on the floor, fragments of the large painting appear as tombstones pierced by timber. Stressing the idea that a tragedy leaves most memorable traces when it strikes home, Jadick creates two domestic “mise-en-scènes” in the second gallery, titled Requiem for a Toxic Deluge dedicated to the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, as she experienced it conducting fieldwork. Armed with camera in

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hand, the artist captured still and moving images of mountains of debris, examining Buffalo Bayou's sandy banks, wooded areas, and a number of wrecked Houston neighborhoods. Alarmed by journalistic reports of deadly toxins polluting the waters, Jadick singles out the names, embroidering them on exhalation valve respirator masks hanging on the wall.

In *Requiem*, we find scenes from Houston's neighborhoods in recovery, evoked through a clothesline where Jadick drapes oversized pictures of the wreckage and trash in front of survivors' homes. Like drying linens, these photos hang together with T-shirts, a uniform and a lab coat identified with the logos of petrochemical corporations. Reduced in scale, the clothesline images become placemats on a glass table supported by three oil barrels. Mugs silhouetting rescues, water bottles and test tubes containing toxic water and sands deposited in the Bayou are arranged on the table, seeming to seep through this intimate setting as unwanted guests at a dinner table or as a postscript of a cautionary tale, where every detail alerts us to the danger of deadly chemicals entering our homes through waterways. This is the artist's way of warning us about the potential recurrence of another, maybe worse disaster, if we do not take preventive actions as a responsible community in this, our Anthropocene era.

Surpik Angelini. March 2019