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JENNIFER SHAW

Hurricane Story

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Born 1972, Lafayette, Indiana

Jennifer Shaw grew up in Milwaukee, studied photography at Rhode Island School of Design, and then moved to New Orleans in pursuit of the artist's life. She teaches the disappearing art of darkroom photography at the Louise S. McGehee School and works as a fine art photographer. She is a founding officer and board member of the New Orleans Photo Alliance and directs the annual PhotoNOLA festival, in addition to chasing after two young sons.

Jennifer's photographs have been published in *B&W Magazine*, *Shots*, *Light Leaks Magazine*, *The Oxford American*, and *The Sun*. Her work is exhibited internationally and held in private and public collections, including the Huntsville Museum of Art, the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art. Shaw has recently been featured in *Plastic Cameras: Toying With Creativity* (Focal Press, 2010) and *Before During After* (UNO Press, 2010). Chin Music Press published her project, *Hurricane Story*, in the spring of 2011.

Hurricane Story

I was nine months pregnant and due in less than a week when Hurricane Katrina blew into the Gulf. In the early hours of August 28, 2005 my husband and I loaded up our small truck with two cats, two dogs, two crates full of negatives, all our important papers and a few changes of clothes. We evacuated to a motel in southern Alabama and tried not to watch the news. Monday, August 29 brought the convergence of two major life-changing events; the destruction of New Orleans and the birth of our first son. It was two long months and 6000 miles on the road before we were able to return home.

Hurricane Story is a depiction of our family's evacuation experience – the birth, the travels and the return. These photographs represent various elements of our ordeal. The project began as a cathartic way to process some of the lingering anger and anxiety over that bittersweet journey. It grew into a narrative series of self-portraits in which toys illustrate my experiences and emotional states during our time in exile.

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We left in the dark of night



My water broke at 1:30 that morning



We sped for hours to an unfamiliar midwife



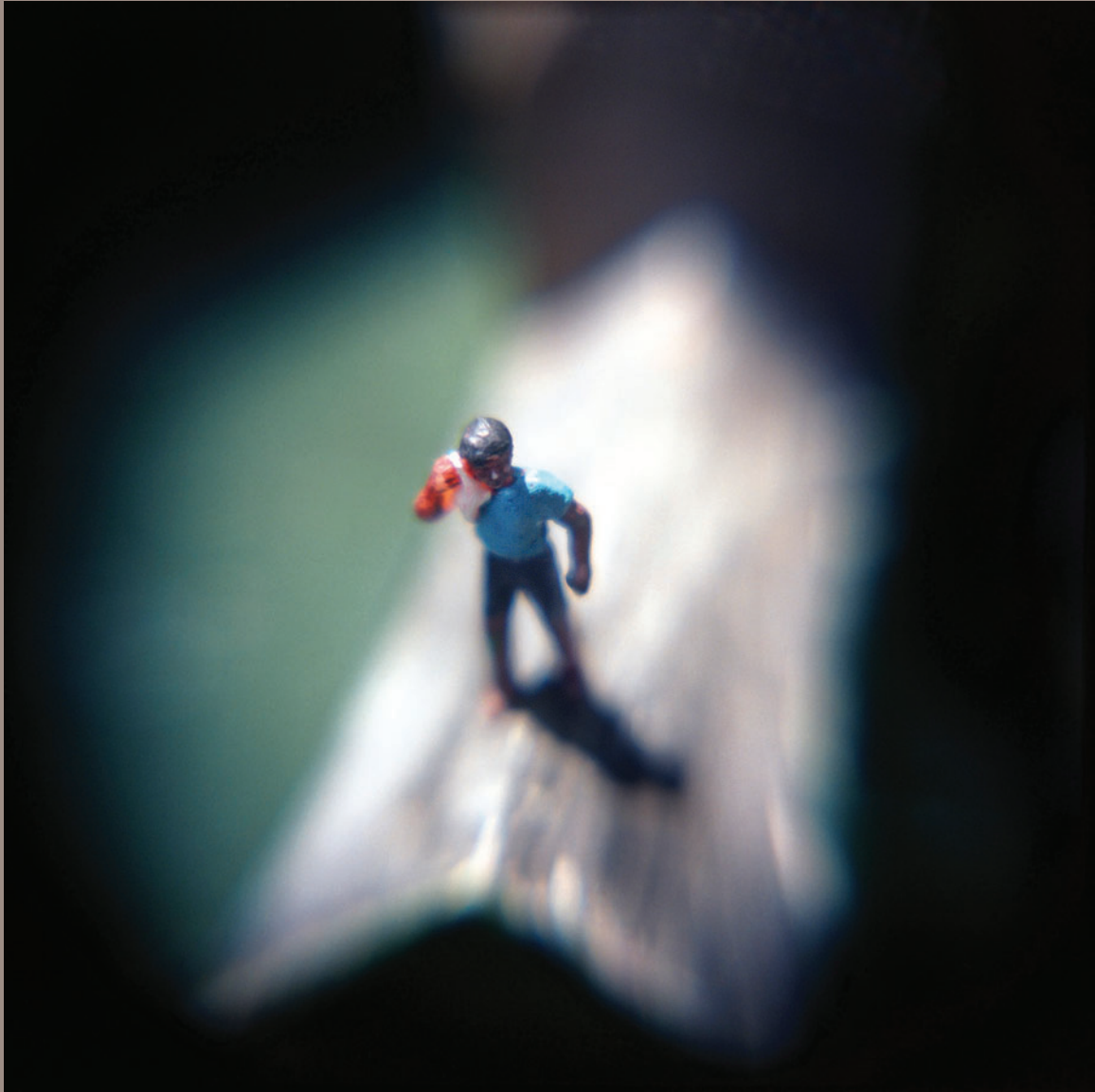
Her eyes were beautiful but the hazmat shield was distracting



At 3:47 a boy was born



The next morning we turned on the TV



It was impossible not to watch



The chaos was hard to fathom



Send in the guard



We drove further north to the farm



Family and friends were delighted to see us



I'll confess that fall was beautiful



My husband turned into a freak



Bad habits resumed



It was the longest two months of my life



We drove home at the end of October



The city was strangely peaceful



Nature claimed the fridge



Tanks in the streets soon seemed normal



It was months till the phone was restored



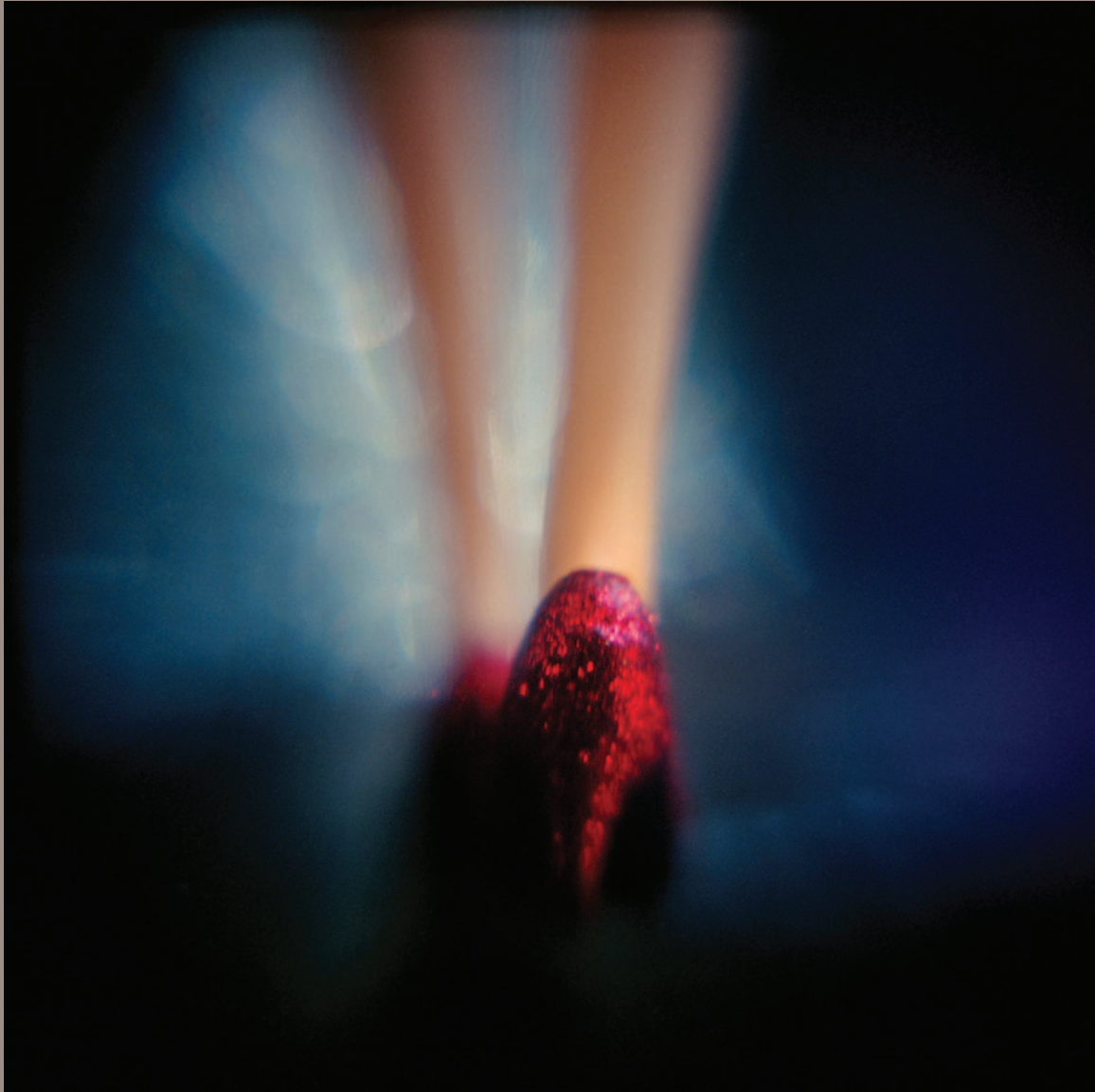
Slowly our friends trickled back



We got a new roof before Christmas



Mardi Gras was amazing



In spite of it all there's no place like home