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# New Orleans

# FESTIVALS

OUR GUIDE TO FALL EVENTS!

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## Her Louisiana Love

### Southeast Louisiana and the Houma Nation

BY ALEXA RENÉE HARRISON

**M**onique Verdin feels most herself in Southeast Louisiana, probably because she is literally of this place. Her DNA has been sustained by the Mississippi mud for more generations than can be traced. As one of approximately 19,000 registered Houma Nation members (one of the largest indigenous peoples tribes east of the Mississippi) it is her goal to be a witness and recorder to her community's ways of life, and to share the stories of the place she calls home.

One of Verdin's records of the inextricably interconnected Southeast Louisiana and Houma Nation history can be viewed in Verdin's documentary, *My Louisiana Love*, which aims to place a 100 year parentheses around a multi-generational Houma tribal experience, exposing the cycles of environmental and social injustices.

Storytelling for Verdin has taken many forms during her 20 years documenting Houma relatives and their homelands. Most recently, Verdin has been traveling with *Cry You One*, an outdoor performance celebrating the people and cultures of Southeast Louisiana, while turning clear eyes on the issue of our vanishing coast.

"The more I have learned about all the ugly issues plaguing this beautiful place, the more I have grown to appreciate the wild wonder and resilience of the nature around me, from the

Mississippi River to the bottomland hardwoods, to the barrier islands, and all the life that lives in between," says Verdin.

Currently she's serving as the director of a collaborative community project called the Land Memory Bank & Seed Exchange, working to build a record of the unique coastal cultures and native ecology present in our challenged wetlands. This experiential project is dedicated to inspiring Mississippi River Delta preservation through cultural happenings, strategic installations, and as a digital archive.

Come November, New Orleans' international art exhibition, Prospect.4, will open to the public, featuring select images from Verdin's archives. Her featured series "Generations of Witness" will juxtapose the passing of time and generations using transparent images, palmetto weavings (historically used to create structures and roofs for Houma homes), and other photo processes to expose a story of the Houma people.

Her continued subject: this place and its people, living in scattered settlements connected by a web of bayous... a web of bayous that are now disappearing into open water as the Gulf claims the land back for the sea, are something Verdin will never stop working to protect, advocate for, and bring awareness to through her art and community engagement. •

#### ART ON DISPLAY

LOCAL EXHIBITS

#### LOVE IN THE GARDEN

September 22

7:00 – 11:55 pm

NOMA's annual fall soiree will take place in the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden. Tickets start at \$50 and include a night of dancing and dining under the stars.

#### THE VICTORY BELLES

September 15

11:45 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
The trio will serenade with music of the 1940s at BB's Stage Door Canteen, an exciting entertainment and dining destination in The National WWII Museum, for \$40 per ticket.

#### THE ARTS MARKET

September 30

10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.  
Browse this monthly open-air market at Palmer Park featuring as many as 130 artists selling affordable, handmade goods, live music and delicious food made by local vendors.



➔ Monique Verdin, is an artist and daughter of the Houma Nation.