

national rice mill lofts

the story



The Rice Mill Lofts is a joyful tribute. To the Creative Ones. The Artisans and Entrepreneurs. Whether one plies his craft on a literal canvas or grows her company as her canvas. It heralds a new time, in this legendary place. The cogent voice of new talent with new ideas. A creative culture of invention. And the passion fueling the reinvention of America's boutique city.

Once the largest rice mill in North America, the building is designed and developed by Sean Cummings and Anthony "T.J." Iarocci, in association with architect Wayne Troyer and designer LM Pagano. It contains 69 lofts, townhouses and studios ranging from one to three bedrooms and 750 to 2100 square feet. Leases are \$1100 to \$4000 monthly. The Rice Mill was renovated by Gibbs Construction. It is financed by Hancock Bank and the United States Department of Housing & Urban Development. Infused with the personality of a boutique hotel as much as the residential, it opens September 01, 2011.

For Cummings's first collaboration with Iarocci, fifth with Troyer and third with Pagano, the unifying idea is clear. Present the massive masonry architecture and exposed structural members as original art. Use restraint, weaving into it only a refined ensemble of consciously chosen beautiful new elements. Waldmann's elegant tubular light fixtures illuminate the perimeter of the vast roof deck, form deconstructed urban chandeliers within the expansive corridors and spill out from the monumental entrances to light exterior pathways, formerly warehouse loading docks. Even parking spaces offer a twist, numbered in an original font by graphic designer Jason Hammell and utilizing reclaimed cypress in lieu of traditional concrete parking stops. The whimsical "Grazz" bike rack is made in Estonia.

Consistent with the idea, interior loft spaces are similarly sophisticated. Set within 10' – 17' ceiling volumes, fixtures like Modern Fan Company's Pensi fan and large bathtubs hand-cast in Los Angeles set the tone, while custom white kitchens-as-furniture are clad in Venatino marble and house an appealing complement of Bosch's energy-star appliances. Details like white gallery-style track lighting, Durkan's custom-milled "divine feminine" cross carpet, large sunflower shower heads and handsome pedestal sinks by Barbara Berry add to the narrative: Sublime open space. Architectural artifacts. Contemporary furnishings. Modern electronics. All bathed in natural light to create quintessential lofts.

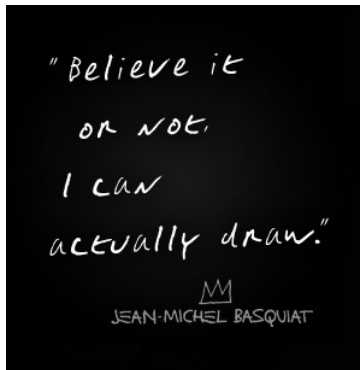
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By far, the building's most distinctive features are its captivating river views and the inspired street art painted throughout its 108,000 square feet. A dramatic 12' glass wall frames a tableau of illuminated Mississippi River Bridge and the poetic movement of maritime tankers. Some of the world's more enigmatic street artists have tagged its walls, including "You Are Beautiful" which appears in the opening sequence of Banksy's indy-art documentary film, *"Exit Through the Gift Shop."* The improvisational riff of text and images tells both tales of caustic discontent, as well as stories of sacred archetypes, heroes and mythmakers.

The breathtaking roof terrace includes a 26' dining table made with the rich coloration and elegant veining of Calacatta Gold slabs, as well as cabana lounge seating and 250 degree views of the river, city skyline and steeples of the Bywater. A 55' lap pool and citrus grove will be added in October. The restaurant opens in January serving the finest and freshest seasonal ingredients, some from the property's own sustainable garden.



Lobbies are furnished with internationally recognized pieces such as Maarten Bass's "Smoke Chair" and B&B Italia's timeless Apta chairs. A classically sensual 19' charcoal rendering of dancing muses graces the main lobby, while Jean-Michel Basquiat's comical quote, *"Believe it or not, I can actually draw,"* flows onto second floor walls. Basquiat's rise was meteoric and his life brief. From SAMO the graffiti sprayer, whose Lower East tags were seasoned with great mystery and wit, he became a pop culture icon holding court in art capitols worldwide. The quote is a subtle nod to his 1988 visit during which he became intrigued by the Mississippi River and its rich African history. The Ya-Ya Kids created seven chairs inspired by "Reinventing the Crescent", the much anticipated riverfront transformation.

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Present too is the functional art of three gifted locals. Mitchell Gaudet created original loft ID's in lieu of traditional signage. The clear glass was cast in a hand-carved carbon mold at Gaudet's Studio Inferno and mounted next to each resident's door. Says the artist, "I chose the raw, imperfect nature of clear glass and spaced the tiles off the wall for two reasons. First, to evoke the essence of Sean's lofts – floating like people and objects in wide open space. Second, to accentuate the contrast between my cast glass and the crude textured brick walls."

Erica Larkin embraced the story of the "Diddley Bow" in creating dramatic door pulls for each public entrance. This "one-string" originated in West Africa and became an iconic instrument as well as symbol popularized by slaves. Often comprised of a single string attached in an arc between two nails in the slave cabin, the diddley bow holds particular significance as a hopeful and proudly defiant reminder that while one might take another human being's freedom, he could not rob that person of the gift of music and joy of shared expression. It is also the precursor to the long neck Blues guitar, and as Larkin states, "In many ways, the sight of these door pulls initiates the experience at the building. I stumbled on the story of this simple instrument and knew instantly that with great reverence I had to create this composition. There is a tangible spirit to all of ekistics' projects, and these steel pulls radiate the spiritual essence of this building and the mosaic of humanity in this city."



David Borgerding created "*Conversation*," a monumental mailbox sculpture. Borgerding explains, "This piece is about the sense of connectedness and belonging we feel when sending or receiving letters, cards and gifts. I want to get at and express the very core of that communication, the connections, our essential humanity." In so doing, he whimsically composed the four mailboxes, as if they are people standing in conversation. To heighten this idea, he painted them the same color, signifying all that we have in common. He then embellished each mailbox with a variety of differently sized, handcrafted boxes. It is these elements, which portray the eccentricities that make us each unique.

Looking beyond architecture and art says ekistics' Jennifer Zurik, "This time we also pushed design into environmental engineering. By investing in common sense practices, residents will enjoy a far healthier living environment, coupled with a reduced carbon footprint." While championing alternative modes of transportation, the Rice Mill will provide Chargepoint's electric car charging station. Operable windows provide natural lighting, while low-E double-insulated

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glazing, as well as programmable thermostats, reduce energy consumption and cost. Low VOC paint, adhesives, sealants and a firm Smoke-Free policy produce purer air to breathe, while Bosch water filters make the water healthier to drink.

Drawing on the principals' hospitality experience, amenities are prevalent. Managed by Property One, the building is entirely smoke free. It offers 24-hour concierge services, complimentary wireless access to Wirefly's high-speed network and an iPad controlled wireless sound system which plays music in the public spaces. Farmers' market produce delivery is encouraged, as are recycling and composting. Like a hotel, newspapers and flavored water are available, as are in-room spa services and room service. Periodic programming includes wine tasting, fashion shows, sunrise yoga, films, plays and private events on the rooftop terrace.

Exuding a distinctive downtown aesthetic, one fueled by rebels, muses, music, art and entrepreneurship, the Rice Mill Lofts is a building of great originality. It sits next to NOCCA, the finest creative arts institute in the nation. It marks the gateway to the Bywater, a new Bohemia and its new riverfront. And, it does so with a purpose described well by Ann Cutler, "One-hundred percent quality, real service, unique design and style – these are the product values that deliver human values which never change: love, pride, joy, the family and self esteem."

Though "ekistics" means the study of where and why people live where they do in an urban setting, answers here are utterly obvious.

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About [ekistics](#)

ekistics, inc., a New Orleans-based real estate development firm, creates uncommonly beautiful residential lofts and boutique hotels. The word "ekistics" literally means "of settlements" or says CEO Sean Cummings, "The study of where and why people live where they do in an urban setting." In 1988, ekistics brought SoHo style lofts to New Orleans. In 1998, it created the city's premier boutique hotel. In 2008 it created Entrepreneurs Row, a workspace for start-ups. In 2009, the principals created "Reinventing the Crescent", the transformation of the local riverfront.

"We love cities", states Cummings, "the energy of great cities and this one especially. In our buildings, people find a cheerful sense of human connectedness. Like Aldo Rossi's idea of the "urban artifact" which brings in far more than the physical building via culture and general human life, people respond to our authentic and imaginatively designed spaces and the celebration of life found in them. It's the power of great design to uplift the human spirit. You know, like Teilhard said, "We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey. "

About [5thfloor](#)

5thfloor Company is a New Orleans-based real estate development, acquisition and asset management company. With over \$150,000,000 in multi-family assets under management in three of the major cities of Louisiana, 5thfloor strives to create a living experience that not only is unique to its residents but one which delivers extraordinary returns to its stakeholders.

About [StudioWTA](#)

studioWTA is an award-winning architecture, planning and interior design firm based in New Orleans. Founded in 1991 and led by Wayne Troyer, the studio operates in an open, collaborative and integrated environment. In WTA's projects, it is the commitment to a shared ideal which allows the diverse talents of individual artists, contractors, craftsmen and people who utilize a space to be valued and find expression. In recent multi-family, hotel and university buildings, it is evident that studioWTA sees design as a directed study of meaning and form, one which is grounded in the complex and shifting relations between ideology, culture, history and the physical contexts in which the projects takes place.

About LM Pagano Design

LM Pagano is a Los Angeles-based designer with offices in LA, New York and New Orleans. A globetrotter, LM's current projects span from Marmaris,Turkey to Whitefish, Montana. Her love affair with New Orleans began 20 years ago, wearing a different chapeau - accomplished jazz singer (Azalea ...). More visits and unique projects brought LM, Sean Cummings and Wayne Troyer together like magnet and iron. Pagano's work is lush, richly textured and whimsical, with a strong back-story. She gravitates towards projects and clients that celebrate the unexpected. In 2009, she received a World Superyacht Award for the Classic Motoryacht "Vajoliroja". Her jewel box office is on New Orleans Entrepreneur's Row, and she often incorporates the art of locals Erica Larkin, Mitch Gaudet, Nicole Charbonnet and Teresa Cole. Once a private chef and still uncommonly gifted in any kitchen, the designer still refuses to share what meal she prepared for then President Reagan.

About Mitchell Gaudet

Glass sculptor Mitchell Gaudet is a New Orleans native. He received a BA from Louisiana State University and a MA in Fine Arts from Tulane University. In 1991, he founded Studio Inferno, a glass studio and vibrant cadre of artists located in Bywater. Born of national and international

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exhibitions, he received both Pollock Kraisner and Joan Mitchell grants, as well as numerous public commissions which include award-winning installations at the New Orleans' BioInnovation Center, International House hotel and Louisiana State Museum. He teaches at the Pilchuck School of Glass, Seattle, Toyama Institute of Glass, Toyama, Japan, The Glass Furnace, Istanbul, Bilwerk, Fraunhofer, Germany, The Glass and Ceramics school in Bornholm, Denmark, Urban Glass, New York and the Alberta College of Arts and Design. Gaudet's artwork is influenced by history, the patina of wear and the need make 'objects of desire'. He is currently living on luck in a camp overlooking the 50,000-acre Bayou Sauvage Wildlife Preserve with his wife Erica and their four Puggs. His mother has not spoken with him in three years.

About Erica Larkin

A native of Coral Gables, Larkin is a gifted metal artist. She graduated from Tulane University and has been a leading metal fabricator and artisan entrepreneur for more than 15 years. In 1999, she and her 150 pound dog actually lived in a 5000 sf loft space and had free-reign of the entire 108,000 sf Rice Mill. It was here that Erica met the man she would one day marry, see Gaudet bio. Larkin's work has been installed in fine homes and hotels nation wide. Locally, she is a favorite among the design community, and since 1998, she has collaborated with Cummings on each ekistics' project, including two boutique hotels, the loa bar, two loft buildings and the former Kingsway Studio, now personal residence. Once an Olympic-calibre swimmer, she is now an avid paddle boarder, navigating both the sea kelp and sharks of Malibu as well as the marsh grass and alligators of New Orleans. Erica categorically denies ever having trained at the Kronk Gym.

About [David Borgerding](#)

Whatever the source of its appeal, sculptor and metalworker David Borgerding seems to revel most in the rigors of his craft. The Grand Rapids, MI. born Borgerding, 39, has been stretching his creative and technical limits through the fire of a metalworker's welder and the intensity of a smith's hammer and anvil. He is equal parts building artisan and fine artist, dividing his time between architectural design work and free-form sculpture. Though the two processes can differ greatly, his pleasure from both is rooted in a simple delight in creating beauty by manipulating difficult elements.

About [Gibbs Construction](#)

Gibbs Construction is a family-owned leader in the Louisiana and Gulf Coast construction industry. It has extensive project experience in military, federal, state, and local government, healthcare, education, historic restoration, and hospitality markets. Gibbs entrepreneurial spirit, corporate culture, financial strength and our dedicated, loyal workforce gives Gibbs Construction the attitude and resources to efficiently and competently service its clients.

About [Property One](#)

Founded in 1985 by and still led by brothers Paul F. Dastugue, III, CPM, and Quentin Dastugue, CCIM Property One serves virtually every aspect of the commercial real estate industry. The company manages office, retail, industrial and multi-family properties, as well as homeowner associations, throughout Louisiana, the Gulf Coast and East Texas delivering excellence inspired by the slogan: Keep it simple. Make a profit. Have fun!