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THE ARTISTRY OF CARNIVAL

“Bror Anders Wikstrom: Bringing Fantasy to Carnival” on view December 8, 2017 – April 29, 2018 at NOMA

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Designer Bror Anders Wikstrom (1854–1909), a Swedish émigré, made a name for himself in New Orleans by engaging with the heart of the Crescent City’s culture: Mardi Gras. In celebration of Wikstrom’s artistry, the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) presents *Bror Anders Wikstrom: Bringing Fantasy to Carnival*, on view from December 22, 2017 through April 29, 2018. The exhibition showcases highlights from Wikstrom’s Mardi Gras float and costume designs, including a full set of twenty float plates from the Krewe of Proteus 1904 “The Alphabet” parade and the only known bound set of float designs for the Krewe of Rex 1910 “The Freaks of Fable” parade.

At the turn of the century, Wikstrom elevated the extravaganza of carnival through his fantastical designs for early Mardi Gras krewes, serving as the chief designer behind twenty floats and hundreds of costumes with Rex, and then with Proteus. *Bringing Fantasy to Carnival* shows watercolor sketches for the elaborate floats and costumes that allowed otherworldly stories to come to life on the streets of New Orleans. The exhibition shows Wikstrom’s designs as early sketches, as final design plates, and as illustrated in newspaper parade bulletins. Photographs show how these creations looked rolling through the streets on Mardi Gras day.

“We are delighted to showcase Wikstrom’s imaginative designs as part of NOMA’s year-long Tricentennial celebration,” said Susan Taylor, NOMA’s Montine McDaniel Freeman Director. “Wikstrom’s creative influences led to the foundation of our museum. He was so renowned in New Orleans that his name was inscribed on the architectural frieze above NOMA’s doors, together with the likes of Audubon, Whistler, and Copley, who signified great art to our 1910 founders.”

Bror Anders Wikstrom was a founder of the New Orleans Artists Association in 1885, one of the civic groups that sparked the Delgado Museum of Art (now NOMA) in 1910. The artist was active in the New Orleans artistic scene from 1883 until 1909 as a marine and landscape painter, cartoonist, and organizer of the art community, but is best beloved today for his hundreds of captivating carnival designs. Many of the best of these drawings are part of Tulane University’s Louisiana Research Collection “Carnival Collection,” which together with several private collections form the core of this NOMA exhibition.

“One sees our creative culture come alive during Carnival season, when everyone in New Orleans,

whether with a krewe or not, uses wigs and costumes to try on a dramatic alter ego," said Mel Buchanan, NOMA's RosaMary Curator of Decorative Arts & Design. "These drawings show the roots of this community spectacle through Wikstrom's endless imagination for costumed characters within evocative scenes. You'll see everything from Rex regalia - neoclassical crowns and scepters, to flower-adorned fairies that bring whimsy and mischief to Mardi Gras day."

About NOMA and the Besthoff Sculpture Garden

The New Orleans Museum of Art, founded in 1910 by Isaac Delgado, houses nearly 40,000 art objects encompassing 5,000 years of world art. Works from the permanent collection, along with continuously changing special exhibitions, are on view in the museum's 46 galleries Fridays from 10 AM to 9 PM; Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from 10 AM to 6 PM; Saturdays from 10 AM to 5 PM and Sundays from 11 AM to 5 PM. NOMA offers docent-guided tours at 1 PM every Tuesday - Sunday. The adjoining Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden features work by over 60 artists, including several of the 20th century's master sculptors. The Sculpture Garden is open seven days a week: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The New Orleans Museum of Art and the Besthoff Sculpture Garden are fully accessible to handicapped visitors and wheelchairs are available from the front desk. For more information about NOMA, call [\(504\) 658-4100](tel:5046584100) or visit www.noma.org. Wednesdays are free admission days for Louisiana residents, courtesy of The Helis Foundation. Teenagers (ages 13-19) receive free admission every day through the end of the year, courtesy of The Helis Foundation.

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