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## ***Ancestors of Congo Square: African Art in the New Orleans Museum of Art***

Exhibition celebrates NOMA's extensive permanent collection of African art, connects African ancestry of New Orleans

**Tweet Release: "Ancestors of Congo Square" keeps the African / New Orleans connection alive @NOMA1910 May 13 - July 17.**

**New Orleans, LA** - The New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) presents *Ancestors of Congo Square: African Art in the New Orleans Museum of Art* on May 13 to July 17. In keeping with the spirit of NOMA's centennial year, the Museum will be highlighting one of the most impressive areas of its permanent collection: its extensive holdings in African art. Additionally, the exhibition will look at the strong artistic and cultural connections between New Orleans and Africa.

The title of the exhibition and its accompanying book is a nod to the historic Congo Square adjacent to the French Quarter in New Orleans, where African American slaves would gather to socialize, make music and dance in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Like Congo Square itself, the exhibition is a metaphor for the process of people coming together from different areas of Africa to create a common spirit and culture. Both the book and the exhibition are dedicated to the musicians and dancers who gathered in Congo Square, and to the artists (most whose names were not recorded) whose artworks are featured in both the exhibition and the book.

The exhibition will be marked by the publication of a 376-page book about NOMA's collection of African art, produced by the New Orleans Museum of Art and published by Scala Publishers of London. Exhibition curator and catalogue editor William Fagaly has been curator of African art at NOMA for over four decades.

"Many times an exhibition will inspire a book. In this instance, it was truly African art curator William Fagaly's book that has inspired this exhibition," said New Orleans Museum of Art director Susan Taylor. Fagaly adds, "There are over 225 color illustrations of pieces in the book, including a number of field photographs of similar works in their native Africa. This will be one of the first publications to include CT scans and x-rays revealing the contents of African terra cotta sculptures."

Along with catalog entries by 48 prominent scholars from North America, Europe and Africa, containing information not published previously, the book represents the most recent research about what is known about these works of art and the

state of the field. "Ancestors of Congo Square" will prove to be a seminal work in the field of African art, and students, scholars, African enthusiasts and the general public alike will enjoy this book both for its educational significance as well as its aesthetic value. The book is available in the Museum Shop for \$75.

While over 200 works of art will be featured in the book, the exhibition will focus on 100 of the most important ones. Dan Kershaw will design and install the show. Gallery displays will feature video footage of a CT scan revealing the inside contents of a rare terra cotta sculpture by the Djenne people. There will also be video footage of African dances featuring works similar to the ones on view in the exhibition. Nearly a dozen photographic enlargements will show Africans dancing similar masks featured in the exhibition.

### **NOMA ADMISSION**

Wednesdays are FREE for all museum visitors. Adults, \$10; Seniors (65 and up) and Students, \$8; Children 7-17, \$6; Children 6 and under, free. Free Wednesdays are made possible through the generosity of The Helis Foundation.

### **ABOUT NOMA AND THE BESTHOFF SCULPTURE GARDEN**

The New Orleans Museum of Art, founded in 1910 by Isaac Delgado, houses more than 30,000 art objects encompassing 4,000 years of world art. Works from the permanent collection, along with continuously changing temporary exhibitions, are on view in the museum's 46 galleries Fridays from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Tuesdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to the adjacent Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, featuring work by over 60 artists, including several of the 20th century's great master sculptors, is free. The Sculpture Garden is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. except for Fridays when it's open until 8:45 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, call (504) 658-4100 or visit [www.noma.org](http://www.noma.org).

