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## Artist Wayne Gonzales Premieres New Work, First Solo US Museum Show

*Light to Dark / Dark to Light* on display at NOMA  
October 7 through February 26

**New Orleans, LA** – New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA) presents *Wayne Gonzales: Light to Dark / Dark to Light*, the artist's first solo museum show in the United States. This exhibition of paintings by nationally recognized Louisiana artist Wayne Gonzales spans from early portraits to never before seen work. Highlights include New Orleans native Lee Harvey Oswald to paintings of the Louisiana Rigolets.

"It's a proud moment for New Orleans that a native son is returning home to have his first major U.S. exhibition here where his inspiration started," said NOMA Director Susan Taylor. "Wayne's first interaction with art was at NOMA and no doubt his exhibition will inspire young artists."

The exhibition features paintings depicting crowds, which Gonzales is well-known for, including waiting crowds in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. The newest painting is a large blue *Seated Crowd* completed this year, depicts a passive audience in a movie theater. Gonzales will also paint two original murals on the walls of the galleries that will contrast idyllic scenes of nature with war images. *Wayne Gonzales: Light to Dark / Dark to Light* is organized by Miranda Lash, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at NOMA.

The title *Light to Dark / Dark to Light* reflects Gonzales's interest in painting within specific color spectrums, creating compositions that appear to dissolve upon closer inspection. The exhibition provides an overview of the ongoing themes in the Gonzales's career, including his interest in the mechanics of light and the dynamics of power, particularly as they are manifested in architecture and crowds.

"The New Orleans Museum of Art was the first place that I saw art and I am very pleased and honored to have this exhibition in New Orleans," Gonzales said.

The artist's complex relationship to his hometown of New Orleans crops up in a number of works presented. For example, Lee Harvey Oswald, who appears in Gonzales's *Peach Oswald*, 2001, was born in New Orleans and lived there in 1963, the year that President John F. Kennedy was shot.

"This is an opportunity for NOMA to highlight a Louisiana artist who has exhibited widely but not in his home state," said Lash. "The political issues that Wayne raises in his paintings: questions of conspiracy, how power is brokered, and how the masses are lead, resonate in a powerful way within the context of New Orleans, but also carry implications unto the global scene."

Gonzales's imagery is often drawn from images circulating in popular media: newspapers and magazines, as well as images pulled from the Internet. Breaking apart these images into components of light and shadow, Gonzales obscures the specific context of these images, and focuses instead on the subjects' conceptual and political resonance as typologies and historical icons.

The show opens with a room of Gonzales's crowd paintings, including the impressive large-scale triptych: *Cheering Crowd*, 2007. Surrounded by standing crowds, seated crowds, and waiting crowds, the viewer must question the motivations and circumstances that draw large numbers of individuals together. *Waiting Crowd*, 2007, for example, depicts a group waiting for help in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

The exhibition includes paintings of architectural spaces by Gonzales, which includes *Oceana*, 2005, depicting high-value resort real estate juxtaposed with *Rigolets*, 2006, an image of the strait along the boundary of the New Orleans, whose docks and bridges were ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Nearby a painting of the *White House*, 2004 is juxtaposed with drawings of political leaders from the Bush administration. Several of these paintings and works on paper of politically charged people and places, are displayed against a site-specific mural backdrops of idyllic landscapes and wartime imagery.

#### **ABOUT WAYNE GONZALES**

Wayne Gonzales was born in New Orleans in 1957. His work has been shown in various international venues including P.S.1 Center for Contemporary Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; the Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain, Dôle; and the Consortium, Dijon, France. Gonzales is represented in public and private collections in the United States and Europe, most notably the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the Whitney Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the Dallas Museum of Art, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the Museum

of Fine Arts Boston and the Neuberger Museum of Art. Gonzales lives and works in New York.

### **EXHIBITION EVENTS**

December 9: 6 pm

Discussion with artist Wayne Gonzales and curator Miranda Lash

### **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. The adjacent Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden features work by 61 artists, including several of the 20th century's great master sculptors. 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 about NOMA, call (504) 658-4100 or visit [www.noma.org](http://www.noma.org).

