



NOMA → CAC presents Brilliant Disguise: Masks and Other Transformations

Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans
900 Camp Street New Orleans, LA 70130
Contact: 504.528.3805 | info@cacno.org
Gallery hours: Wednesday through Monday, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Gallery admission: \$5 general admission,
\$3 students & seniors, FREE to CAC members & Louisiana residents

New Orleans Museum of Art
1 Collins Diboll Circle
New Orleans, LA 70124
504.658.4100

Brilliant Disguise: Masks and Other Transformations

CAC | 900 Camp Street | Lupin Foundation Gallery (second floor)

On view: March 8 – June 16, 2013

Opening reception: Friday, March 8, 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

(New Orleans, LA) – NOMA → CAC, a new partnership between the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Contemporary Arts Center is presenting *Brilliant Disguise: Masks and Other Transformations*, an exhibition that explores the motivations and meanings behind masking and disguise as it is manifested in contemporary art and in masks of different cultures.

“We are thrilled to introduce *Brilliant Disguise* as the first manifestation of this innovative partnership between NOMA and the CAC,” said Susan M. Taylor, Director of the New Orleans Museum of Art. “By combining our resources and drawing upon each other’s curatorial expertise and vision, we will provide engaging contemporary art experiences for the New Orleans community.”

Since time immemorial, people have used masks and disguises as a means of assuming an alternate identity. In some cases, masks allow the wearer to theatrically perform a character, and in other instances, the secrecy afforded by a mask permits the wearer to more freely express their true nature. Sometimes, the spiritual power or prestige residing in the mask itself becomes a channel for conveying power. From the festival to the confessional, masks protect their wearers from the societal judgments of everyday life and allow the wearers to function on an alternate plane. For artists working in recent decades, masks and disguise provide a means of portraying identity itself as a construct or a line of inquiry to be challenged and manipulated.

“Masks and disguise provide an excellent opportunity to think about how we define or ‘perform’ who we are,” said Miranda Lash, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at NOMA. “When a mask or disguise is worn, it signals a specific identity, communicated by appearance, cultural, spiritual, and familial history, and in some cases, layers and systems of secrecy. The objects presented in this exhibition are a combination of rarely seen treasures from the NOMA collection, and groundbreaking work by artists who take full advantage of the multivalent properties of disguise. When we cannot see an individual’s everyday face or body, how does it change how we react to them? Can we have faith in the performer or the face behind the mask?”

The exhibition *Brilliant Disguise*, organized by Lash, was influenced and inspired by New Orleans and its Mardi Gras, which has a rich history of masking. Exhibiting artists include: John Graham, Nikki Lee, Jim Nutt, Yasumasa Morimura, Gillian Wearing, Cindy Sherman, Yinka Shonibare, Lorna Simpson, and John Waters.

NOMA → CAC

NOMA → CAC is an ongoing exhibition and programming partnership between two of the most significant cultural institutions of New Orleans: the New Orleans Museum of Art and the Contemporary Arts Center. *Brilliant Disguise* is the first initiative of this unique collaboration, which will draw on the strengths of both institutions to provide thought-provoking exhibitions and programming for a cross section of the community.

About NOMA and the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden

The New Orleans Museum of Art, founded in 1910 by Isaac Delgado, houses over 35,000 art objects encompassing 4,000 years of international art. Works from the permanent collection, along with continuously changing temporary exhibitions, are on view in the museum's 46 galleries Tuesdays-Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturdays and Sundays from 12 a.m. to 5 p.m. The adjacent Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden features work by 62 artists, including several of the 20th century's master sculptors. The Sculpture Garden is open seven days a week from 11 a.m. until 5 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. (www.noma.org)

About the Contemporary Arts Center

The Contemporary Arts Center (CAC) was formed in the fall of 1976 by a passionate group of visual artists when the movement to tear down the walls between visual and performing arts was active nationwide. As the burgeoning arts district grew, so did the CAC, evolving to meet the increasing needs of a diverse audience and artist communities. Renovated in 1990, and donated to the CAC in 1999, the CAC's building mixes the timelessness of New Orleans' historic architecture with contemporary materials and usable open spaces. Today, the CAC is one out of a handful of nationwide arts organizations who have remained solvent and successful while serving a truly multi-disciplinary mission. Currently dedicating two floors, about 10,000 square feet of gallery space, of the 4-story building to rotating exhibitions throughout the year, the CAC is home to artists' bold experiments in painting, theater, photography, performance art, dance, music, video, education, and sculpture. (www.cacno.org)