



## New Orleans Museum of Art

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jim Mulvihill, Director of Communications and Marketing, (504) 658-4106

# First Iris Viewing Festival April 4

*Springtime celebration will feature new blooms, education and music*

**NEW ORLEANS (Monday, March 9, 2009)**—Celebrate the arrival of springtime with a stroll through the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden during the New Orleans Museum of Art’s first-ever **Iris Viewing Festival** on Saturday, April 4. Hundreds of new blooms planted around the lagoon this winter will reveal themselves in time for the celebration, which also will feature live music, educational demonstrations and a one-day-only contemporary art installation, *Birds in the Park*, by **Christy Hengst** of Santa Fe, N.M.

“We’re honoring a history of iris planting around this same lagoon that dates back 75 years,” said Sculpture Garden Manager **Pamela Buckman**. “Long before the Sculpture Garden existed this lagoon was the site of an annual iris planting that honored poet and newspaper publisher **Pearl Rivers**. With the help of the Louisiana Iris Society, we are now able to revive that tradition.”

Rivers was publisher of *The Daily Picayune*, a precursor to *The Times-Picayune*. She became legendary in the newspaper business for introducing gossip columns and women’s news to the South. Meanwhile, Rivers was already known throughout New Orleans for her outspokenness, as well as her penchant for finding trouble. In 1932, the Louisiana Iris Society honored Rivers by planting irises “in every hue of the rainbow” on the banks of the same City Park lagoon that the Sculpture Garden was built around.

The hundreds of irises that will bloom in the Sculpture Garden prior to the April 4 Viewing Festival also will come in a variety of colors.

Iris Viewing Festival happenings include: live music in the Sculpture Garden from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m.; **propagation demonstrations** with **Patrick O’ Connor** (Louisiana Iris Society) and **Mark Schexnayder** (LSU Agricultural Center); **Ikebana demonstrations** with **Ikebana International**; and the debut of a new self-guided Audio Tour of the Sculpture Garden for use on mobile phones.

**Admission to the Besthoff Sculpture Garden is always free.**

*Iris Viewing Festival April 4*

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**More about *Birds in the Park***

In conjunction with the Iris Viewing Festival on April 4, NOMA presents a one-day-only exhibition, *Birds in the Park*, by contemporary artist **Christy Hengst** of Santa Fe, N.M. The installation is comprised of several dozen porcelain birdlike forms arranged on the ground. Printed on the birds are a variety of messages that, taken as a whole, pose questions about the atrocities of war and how people live with those realities on a daily basis. *Birds in the Park* will travel internationally throughout 2009. For more information on *Birds in the Park* or Hengst, visit [www.christyhengst.com](http://www.christyhengst.com).

**More about Iris Viewing Festival**

The Iris Viewing Festival will be held concurrent with the first day of City Park's two-day Spring Garden Show at the Botanical Garden, located behind the Besthoff Sculpture Garden. The Sculpture Garden's rear entrance will be open April 4 to allow easy access between the Botanical Garden, the Sculpture Garden and the Museum.

**About NOMA and the Sydney and Walda 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 Wednesdays from noon to 8 p.m. and Thursdays to Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission to the Museum is free to Louisiana residents through the generosity of The Helis Foundation.

Admission to the adjacent Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden, featuring work by 57 artists, including several of the 20th century's master sculptors, is always free during regular Museum hours.

The New Orleans Museum of Art and the 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).

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