



**New Orleans
Museum of Art**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

***NOMA Presents A Discourse in Abstraction:
Jennifer Odem and NOMA's Permanent Collection***

New permanent video art space also open on second floor

[Hi-res images available upon request.]

NEW ORLEANS (Friday, March 20, 2009)—This spring, from now through May 24, the New Orleans Museum of Art presents *A Discourse in Abstraction: Jennifer Odem and NOMA's Permanent Collection*, an exhibition of new sculpture by the New Orleans-based artist juxtaposed with modern and contemporary works from the permanent collection.

A Discourse in Abstraction is the first in a series of exhibitions dedicated to highlighting Louisiana contemporary art. Situated in dialogue with abstract paintings from NOMA's permanent collection, Odem's works position themselves at the crossroads between monumentality and playfulness. Combining materials such as Hydro-stone with flocking fiber, Odem's sculptures walk the line between extreme contrasts.

In her artist statement, Odem explains: "The idea of vulnerability as strength underlies my investigation of forms and materials. The industrialization of organic material inverts characteristics of stability and fragility. Seemingly delicate sculptures made from strong, durable materials expose a gap that exists between the permanent and impermanent, the feminine and masculine, the natural and artificial. Subverted meanings, humor, and absurdity all play a role in my portrayals of gender issues, human relationships, and our connection to the land, while the interplay between contradictory and exaggerated forms allows me to question social traditions and belief systems."

Often returning to the shape of "mounds" in her work, Odem's sculptures emphasize the idea of an interior and exterior space. In the case of *Bluebell*, *Myrrh*, and *Salt Mound*, she describes the mounds as having a vessel-like, feminine quality, despite their overall phallic shape. Her freestanding curtain, *Drape*, similarly creates an architectural interior by partially enclosing space inside its crescent shape.

A Discourse in Abstraction: Jennifer Odem and NOMA's Permanent Collection
2/2/2

A Discourse in Abstraction is organized by Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art **Miranda Lash**. The works from the permanent collection, selected by Odem and Lash, include a new acquisition, the **Yves Klein** sculpture *Venus Bleue* (1962), as well as large-scale abstract paintings by **Judy Chicago**, **Thomas Downing**, **Basilios Poulos**, **James Rosenquist**, **Pat Steir**, **Karl-Heinz Ströhle**, **Tony Stubbing** and **John Torreano**.

More about Jennifer Odem

Based in New Orleans, Odem has exhibited her work both locally and abroad. Her 2008 and 2009 exhibitions include a solo show at 511 Gallery in New York and group shows at the Winkelman Gallery in New York, the Front Gallery in New Orleans, and Tulane University's Newcomb Center for Women. She has drawn a great deal of inspiration from her seven artist residencies abroad in locations including Ireland, England, and Poland, as well as from her 2007 residency at the New Orleans Center for Creative Arts.

Odem is the creator of several outdoor sculptural installations, including *Wheels of Fortune*, sited in the salt flats of Utah for the Center for Land Use Interpretation (1998), *Island*, produced for the Center for Polish Sculpture in Oronsco, Poland (2004), and the *St. Rose Project*, a private commission in St. Rose, Louisiana. Her upcoming installation, *Blue Fence*, a site-specific sculpture presented in collaboration with AORTA projects, will be unveiled on Saturday, April 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. in the Upper Ninth Ward at the intersection of Poland Avenue and North Miro.

Wednesday, April 15, 6-8 p.m. — Reception for new exhibitions

Join us to celebrate the openings of two special exhibitions—*Women Artists in Louisiana, 1825-1965: A Place of Their Own* and *A Discourse in Abstraction: Jennifer Odem and NOMA's Permanent Collection*. Co-organized by NOMA and The Historic New Orleans Collection, *Women Artists in Louisiana* highlights the work of female artists from the Bayou State in a variety of mediums and styles. *A Discourse in Abstraction* showcases new work by the emerging New Orleans-based sculptor Odem juxtaposed with 20th-century art owned by the Museum. This event is part of the Mid-Week in Mid-City series of public programs on Wednesday evenings and is open to the public.

New video art space opens with Kara Hearn

The New Orleans Museum of Art now has a permanent space devoted to video art. The screening room is part of the second-floor modern and contemporary galleries, adjacent to both the permanent collection galleries and the Frederick R. Weisman Galleries for Louisiana Art.

The video art space is currently screening recent work by Houston-based artist **Kara Hearn**. Recreating the “head space” of dreams and reverie, *One Thing After Another* (2007) takes viewers through a series of vignettes, casting Hearn in all of the character roles. An interdisciplinary video artist, Hearn makes what she describes as “quiet and absurd work about the way tragedies reside in the head; the way heroisms play out in the mind’s eye, the inside place where stories get conjured, dreamed, remembered.”

A Discourse in Abstraction: Jennifer Odem and NOMA's Permanent Collection
3/3/3/3

Hearn's work has been screened and exhibited nationally and internationally at such venues as DiverseWorks, Houston; White Columns, New York; the Luckman Gallery, Los Angeles; the Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; the Dallas Video Festival; Women in the Directors Chair International Film and Video Festival; and the Festival Tous Courts International Festival of Cinema. She received an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley in 2007 and is currently a Core Fellow at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

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 59 artists, including several of the 20th century's great master sculptors, is always free during regular Museum hours.

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.

