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ENRIQUE ALFÉREZ MURAL TO RETURN TO PUBLIC VIEW
Historic Mural Gifted to New Orleans Museum of Art



Jules L. Cahn, *Enrique Alferez*, April 1953, The Historic New Orleans Collection, 1996.123.3.6

NEW ORLEANS, LA – Created for the lobby of the New Orleans Times-Picayune Building in 1967, Enrique Alferez’s plaster relief mural *Symbols of Communication* celebrates humanity and connectedness by showcasing the universal desire to share stories through language. A gift of Joe Jaeger, Barry Kern, Michael White and Arnold Kirschman to the New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA), the mural will be centrally featured in the museum’s 2020 auditorium renovation, generously funded by The Zemurray Foundation.

In *Symbols of Communication*, Alferez weaves together characters and symbols that represent different forms of human language across many diverse cultures and histories. His mural contains Roman and Greek alphabets, Mayan glyphs, hieroglyphics from ancient Egypt, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese characters, and the dots and dashes of Morse code and Braille, among other symbols and sources. To create this mural, Alferez stamped a series of plaster panels with hand-carved wooden molds that form an interlocking pattern that aims to show the connections between and among the characters.

“*Symbols of Communication* highlights the power and importance of systems of communication, as well as the role that art has to play in helping us reach across cultures to connect with others,” says Susan Taylor, Montine McDaniel Freeman Director of NOMA. “In a time when communication and mutual understanding is more critical than ever, our hope is that Enrique Alferez’s mural will serve as a powerful reminder of art’s ability to unify and reflect issues of topical interest.”

NOMA

Enrique Alf rez is one of New Orleans' most influential and important artists. Born in Mexico in 1901, he first visited New Orleans in 1929. He lived between Mexico and New Orleans until his death in 1999. He created over twenty major public works—sculptures and wall reliefs in metal, plaster and wood—throughout the city. Alf rez came of age during the political fervor of the Mexican Revolution, and grew up in a world in which art was deeply intertwined with politics. In the early 1920s, he was exposed to the work of Mexican artists like Diego Rivera, Jos  Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros who made art a centerpiece of the Mexican Revolution. Like them, Alf rez's large-scale public artworks and murals advance progressive political views and shine light on social issues of the time—especially the importance of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange.

NOMA thanks Joe Jaeger, Barry Kern, Michael White and Arnold Kirschman, for their generosity and community leadership. After purchasing The Times-Picayune building in 2016, the new owners recognized the artistic historical importance of the mural. Guided by their desire to keep the work in New Orleans and accessible to the community, selected NOMA as its new home.

NOMA's Auditorium Complex Renovation

The auditorium complex renovation will create a flexible and contemporary space, designed to serve in multiple capacities, from theater in the round to a banquet space, lecture hall, and more. The renovation will provide NOMA with a state-of-the-art platform for interdisciplinary arts experiences and enable opportunities for expanded and new community partnerships, advancing the museum's position as a nexus for the arts in New Orleans. The auditorium complex renovation will also include a renovation to Caf  NOMA, which is operated by long-term NOMA partner Ralph Brennan Restaurant Group. To learn more about NOMA's Auditorium Complex Renovation, visit www.noma.org/support/auditorium-renovation/.

Additional Information

Press-approved images are available [here](#).

About NOMA and the Besthoff Sculpture Garden

The New Orleans Museum of Art, founded in 1910 by Isaac Delgado, houses more than 40,000 works of art encompassing 5,000 years of history. Works from the permanent collection, along with continuously changing special exhibitions, are on view in the museum's 46 galleries Wednesday through Sunday, 10 AM to 5 PM. The adjoining Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden features work by more than 90 sculptures, including works from several 20th and 21st-century master sculptors. NOMA's Besthoff Sculpture Garden is open to the public Wednesday through Sunday, 9:30 AM to 5 PM. 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. Museum admission is free on Wednesdays for Louisiana residents, courtesy of The Helis Foundation. Children 12 and under receive free admission. Teenagers (ages 13-19) receive free admission courtesy of The Helis Foundation.

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