

The Historic New Orleans Collection Quarterly

VOLUME XXXIX
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WINTER 2022



THROWING A PARTY: Mardi Gras Returns to the Streets and to THNOG

EVENT CALENDAR

For more information on any of the following events, please email events@hnoc.org.

FINE PRINT BOOK CLUB

Join THNOC staff in discussing *Big Chief Harrison and the Mardi Gras Indians*, Al Kennedy's 2010 biography of Donald Harrison, Big Chief of the Guardians of the Flame.

Wednesday, January 12, 7 p.m. CST

Online via Zoom

Free; registration required. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

CARNIVAL FUN AT THNOC

Join us at The Collection for a full day of family-friendly Carnival activities: crafts, a dancing lesson with the Disco Amigos, and special museum tours.

Saturday, January 29, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

520 Royal Street

Free and open to the public

Want to make sure your costume is perfect for Fat Tuesday? Sign up for a special adults-only costume workshop, 2:30–4 p.m. on January 29. Registration fee of \$85 includes finished wig, makeup lesson, king cake, and champagne. Registration required; visit my.hnoc.org.

FOOD FORUM: CELEBRATING THE SEASONS—WINTER

Matt Haines, author of *The Big Book of King Cake*, will share his knowledge of the beloved Carnival confection while offering guests a king cake tasting. Winter also brings the celebration of Têt (Vietnamese New Year); local Vietnamese-cuisine experts will discuss the festival and its food. Director Bao Ngo and producer Glen Pitre will join the talk and screen their 2021 documentary about New Orleans's Vietnamese community, *Mary, Queen of Vietnam*.

Friday, February 11, 11 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

In person at the Broad Theater,

636 N. Broad Street

Online via Zoom

Pay what you're able; \$30 suggested registration fee

CARING FOR YOUR COLLECTION: MARDI GRAS COLLECTIBLES

Ash Wednesday arrives March 2, meaning it's time to sweep up the glitter, sort your beads, and clean your costumes. Join THNOC experts to learn how to safely store your throws, invitations, jewels, and doubloons for future generations to enjoy.

Saturday, March 12, 11:30 a.m.

Online via Zoom

Free; registration required. To register, visit www.hnoc.org.

WRC SYMPOSIUM

In conjunction with the exhibition *Making Mardi Gras*, the 26th Williams Research Center Symposium goes behind the scenes with Carnival artists and scholars.



Making Mardi Gras opening reception

Friday, January 21, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

520 Royal Street

Free

“In Conversation with Big Chiefs: Traditions and Music of Mardi Gras Indian Tribes”

Saturday, January 22, 10:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Toulouse Theater, 615 Toulouse Street

Pay what you're able; \$10 minimum; \$25 suggested

“Making Mardi Gras Past, Present, and Future”

Join moderator Arthur Hardy and a slate of speakers exploring the artistry and evolution of Carnival practices.

Sunday, January 23, 11 a.m.–5:30 p.m.

Mardi Gras World, 1380 Port of New Orleans Place

Pay what you're able; \$30 minimum; \$65 suggested

Registration is required for all symposium events. To register, visit my.hnoc.org.

CURRENT HOURS

520 ROYAL STREET

Tricentennial Wing, French Quarter Galleries, Café Cour, and The Shop

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.;

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

533 ROYAL STREET

Louisiana History Galleries, Courtyard

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.;

Sunday, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

410 CHARTRES STREET

Williams Research Center Reading Room

Tuesday–Saturday, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

By appointment only. Appointments must be made at least 24 hours in advance.

Please email reference@hnoc.org or call (504) 523-4662.

For current safety precautions, please visit www.hnoc.org.

EXHIBITIONS & TOURS

All exhibitions are free unless otherwise noted.

CURRENT

Prospect.5 Exhibitions

See page 13

On view through January 23, 2022

Free

Making Mardi Gras

See page 2

January 6–May 8, 2022

520 Royal Street

Fit for a King: The Rex Archives at THNOC

See page 6

January 6–May 8, 2022

Williams Research Center, 410 Chartres

Street

CONTINUING

History of the French Quarter Galleries

520 Royal Street

Louisiana History Galleries

533 Royal Street

Virtual Field Trips

Virtual field trips are presented over Zoom and cover a range of topics, including Reconstruction, Louisiana Indigenous History, Exploring the Archive, and NOLA Culture Connections. Descriptions, a full schedule, and links to recorded versions of past tours can be found at www.hnoc.org/programs/virtual-field-trips.

Self-Guided Courtyard Tours and French Quarter Tours App

THNOC's three French Quarter courtyards are currently open to the public. Visitors can learn about the architecture and history of the spaces, then head out for a self-guided tour of the French Quarter using THNOC's French Quarter Tours app. With the app, users can build a customized walking tour or take one of eight themed tours to see significant sites in the historic city center. Themes include Free People of Color, Music, Bourbon and Beyond, Around Jackson Square, and Lower Quarter.

533 Royal Street, 520 Royal Street,

and 722 Toulouse Street

App available for download on the Apple

App Store and Google Play

Check www.hnoc.org for updates on gallery openings and closures.

UPCOMING

Backstage at “A Streetcar Named Desire”

March 18–July 3, 2022

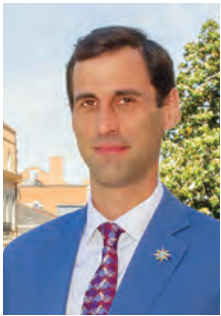
520 Royal Street



ON THE COVER

Muses shoe

created for 2019; shoe, rhinestones, faux pearls, faux flowers, feathers
by Elizabeth Black
gift of Elizabeth Black, 2019.0258



FROM THE PRESIDENT

2022 is a year of great expectations, and they start with Carnival. While Mardi Gras 2020 may long be remembered for the early spread of COVID-19 in the United States, all of New Orleans is looking to this year's festivities with crossed fingers, hoping it will be a moment of long-awaited, if cautious, reemergence from the pandemic.

Our exhibition *Making Mardi Gras* foregrounds the fact that Mardi Gras is made by all of us. Its enduring traditions, its continual adaptation and development, its firm entrenchment in the imaginations of people all over the world—all stem directly from the holiday's annual renewal in the hands of countless people, working separately or collaboratively, and all coming together in the end.

Mardi Gras is the ultimate reminder that New Orleans shares its history and culture with the world, but one perennial concern is whether the city's biggest tourism event is more of a benefit or a detriment to the community. The massive crowds and emphasis on beads and throws have become the face of Mardi Gras over the years, but they're not the only parts of Carnival, and some might argue that they're not what holds a community together.

With *Making Mardi Gras*, we can tell a fuller story of the season, one that goes beyond the popular depictions of booze and beads to include makers and revelers from all media, walks of life, and corners of the city. And, we're not doing it alone, thanks to a generous sponsorship by Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World and Kern Studios. The sponsorship helps to pay for and promote the exhibition at THNOC, but the partnership will continue beyond the life of the exhibition and will see THNOC and Mardi Gras World working together to interpret the diverse history of Mardi Gras and New Orleans. Our great expectation for *Making Mardi Gras* is that it may serve as a step toward a new way of sharing New Orleans with the world—Carnival history and industry working together to champion the collective creativity of our city. —DANIEL HAMMER

CONTENTS

ON VIEW / 2

Making Mardi Gras celebrates the art and artistry of Carnival.

How H. Alvin Sharpe became the father of the Mardi Gras doubloon

Memory, history, and nature combine in Dawoud Bey's new show for Prospect.5. Off-Site

PARTNERSHIPS / 16

THNOC and the Neighborhood Story Project present a new collection of narratives by members of social aid and pleasure clubs.

COMMUNITY / 18

On the Job

Staff News

In Memoriam

Focus on Philanthropy

Donors

Become a Member

On the Scene

ACQUISITIONS / 26

Acquisition Spotlight: A massage-parlor manual shows Bourbon Street during a time of transition.

Recent Additions



A

EXHIBITION

Making Mardi Gras

On view January 6–May 8, 2022

520 Royal Street

Free

Making a Scene

A new exhibition celebrates the many visual and performing arts that bring the party to Mardi Gras.

One of Mardi Gras's finest virtues is that it's a completely homegrown affair. Carnival writ large does not have a central office, planning committee, or corporate sponsor, in the way of the city's other festivals. It's an enormous collective effort on the part of local government and thousands of different people to put on one of the greatest shows on Earth.

Behind the scenes of that spectacle, a vast, eclectic landscape awaits: there are the small krewes that make their costumes, floats, and even throws themselves. The large krewes, meanwhile, support local float builders, costume designers, production companies, marching bands, and dance troupes, not to mention an overseas industry of bead- and throw-makers. A lot of unseen work goes into these parades and parties, and THNOC's new exhibition, *Making Mardi Gras*, honors the craftspeople, musicians, and artists—some professional, some everyday New



B

A. Edna Karr High School marching band in the NOMTOC parade

2015; inkjet print
by Akasha Rabut, photographer
2021.0184.1

B. Krewe of Dorians king's costume

created for 1938; silk, sequins, silver, paper, rhinestones, glass, metal, velvet, fur
gift of Sherrian Zetzmann, 2005.0346.1, .2

Orleanians—who create showstopping displays each year. Sponsored by Blaine Kern’s Mardi Gras World and Kern Studios, the exhibition will be accompanied by an array of lectures, workshops, and family-friendly programming (both virtual and in-person), along with the annual Williams Research Center Symposium the weekend of January 21–23.

The exhibition surveys both the formal and informal customs of Mardi Gras and pays tribute to the artists who design and produce invitations, costumes, gowns, shoes, favors, floats, and parade throws. Gallery visitors will encounter the pageantry of the old-line krewes that grew out of white male elite society in the late 19th century. Kings and queens, scepters and crowns, masks and tunics—these krewes set a template that has been copied, parodied, altered, and subverted over the years, from Zulu’s original tin-can crown to all-female krewes such as Muses and Femme Fatale and gay krewes like Yuga and Amon-Ra.

Elsewhere in the galleries, visitors will meet high school marching bands like the St. Augustine “Marching 100” and Edna Karr, which provide the unmistakable soundtrack



C. Mystic Club queen’s scepter

created for 1940; wood, cloth, rhinestones, plastic
gift of Mrs. Bruce R. Hoefer, 1997.78.4

D. Creole Wild West Mardi Gras Indian suit

created for 2018; feathers, beads, rhinestones, turquoise, canvas, shoes, synthetic hair, plastic
 by Chief Howard Miller
acquisition made possible by the Laussat Society, 2021.0052

E. Krewe of Tucks throw: toilet-brush effigy of former New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin

created for 2014; wood, plastic, feathers, paper, wire, rope
gift of Mrs. Neel Fallis, 2014.0238





F

F. Box given as favor at Twelfth Night Revelers ball

created for 1938; brass, plastic, paper, grass, ink
gift of Mrs. Edmund E. Richardson, 1988.59.25

G. Design for Twelfth Night Revelers tableau, "Audubon and his Creations"

created for 1873; watercolor and gouache on Bristol board
 by Charles Britton
 1975.117.10

H. Zulu coconut

created for 1952; coconut, paint
gift of Stephen Hinks, 1997.86

I. Marian H. Pierre, queen of Zulu

1987; inkjet print
 by Mitchel Osborne, photographer
gift of Mitchel Osborne, 2007.0001.285



H



G

to Carnival parades—drums booming, horns blasting, drum majors marching knee to nose. These young, predominantly Black musicians not only fuel the sonic power of Carnival; their auxiliary dance teams, with their sequined uniforms and coordinated moves, have inspired an entire generation of adult Carnival dance teams. With risqué names like the Camel Toe Lady Steppers and the Muff-a-Lottas, these bands of merry-makers bring humor and can-do spirit to the parades. Beyond the different entities that make up big Mardi Gras parades, there are a host of smaller krewes, such as the Jefferson City Buzzards and the Krewe de Jeanne d'Arc, who parade in a more informal fashion. Skeleton gangs, Mardi Gras Indians, and Baby Dolls all grew out of Black New Orleans culture and have become legendary parts of the Carnival season.



I

Parades are gifts from krewes to the public, with themes chosen to entertain and educate spectators. Because parades are nonprofit endeavors, krewes are allowed to depict copyrighted images in their float designs. So long as there's no advertising, no subject is off-limits. Drawn from folklore, global history, literature, and popular culture, parade themes reflect the interests and ideas of the krewe leaders who choose them. This means that in the past, parade themes sometimes included discriminatory ideas and racist depictions, such as the 1877 Momus parade, which criticized the multi-racial Republican government of the time.

With over 50 parades per year, and up to 45 floats per parade, float building in New Orleans is a year-round industry that employs scores of skilled artisans. A float



must be sturdy and beautiful, able to support dozens of riders throwing beads, and prepared for all kinds of weather, while also conveying the artistic theme of the parade as it rolls past spectators. In modern parades, some floats are actually several trailers attached together with moving parts and elaborate lighting, requiring advanced levels of engineering. The bases for the floats are often the most historic parts of a parade, with some originating as 19th-century cotton carts or early 20th-century city utility wagons.

Early krewes in the 19th century sent their costume designs to Paris, where theater ateliers created the garments. Into the mid-20th century, many krewes masks were still imported from France. Today, there are costumers and seamstresses across the city who create colorful tunics and masks that match float themes.

Mardi Gras artists and makers turn inexpensive materials into extravagant

creations: glass stones are transformed into crown jewels, turkey feathers are fitted together into colorful headdresses, and Styrofoam and papier-mâché are fashioned into ornate floats. Mardi Gras Indians are known the world over for the hundreds of hours they spend hand-sewing the pieces of beadwork and feathered finery that make up their suits.

The exhibition also celebrates the resilience and adaptability of New Orleans Carnival culture; as we've seen recently, Mardi Gras doesn't disappear even in the face of a pandemic. When COVID-19 put a halt to traditional festivities in 2021, New Orleans responded with the Krewe of House Floats. Thousands of residents across the city decorated their homes or hired out-of-work Carnival artists to do the job, many through the Krewe of Red Beans's philanthropic project Hire a Mardi Gras Artist. The house floats provided a powerful visual reminder that the show must go on and gave every New Orleanian a chance to participate directly in the making of Mardi Gras. —LYDIA BLACKMORE



J. **Camel Toe Lady Steppers costume** 2020; synthetic textile, feathers, sequins by Casey Kane Love
gift of the Camel Toe Lady Steppers, 2021.0111

K. **"High Priest" float for Krewe d'Etat parade, "KDTV in Dictavision"** (detail) created for 2007; inkjet print by Royal Artists
gift of Le Krewe d'Etat, 2018.0314.1.6.3

L. **Decorative record album presented to Antoinette K-Doe, queen of Krewe du Vieux** created for 2001; vinyl, aluminum foil, plastic
gift of Betty Ann Fox McGee, 2009.0232.677





A

EXHIBITION

Fit for a King: The Rex Archives at THNOC

On view January 6–May 8, 2022
Williams Research Center,
410 Chartres Street
Free

A. Inaugural Rex doubloon

created for 1960; silver
by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist
*The L. Kemper and Leila Moore Williams
Founders Collection, 1965.4.1*

**B. Doubloon and doubloon-paperweight
order form**

September 1, 1960
gift of the Rex Organization, 2006.0032.55

Sharpe Relief

Millions of parade-goers have caught and collected his invention, but his art and interests went far beyond Carnival. The *Quarterly* takes a look at the amazing life of H. Alvin Sharpe.

To Carnival connoisseurs, it’s a well-worn origin story—how H. Alvin Sharpe changed Mardi Gras forever with a flick of the wrist.

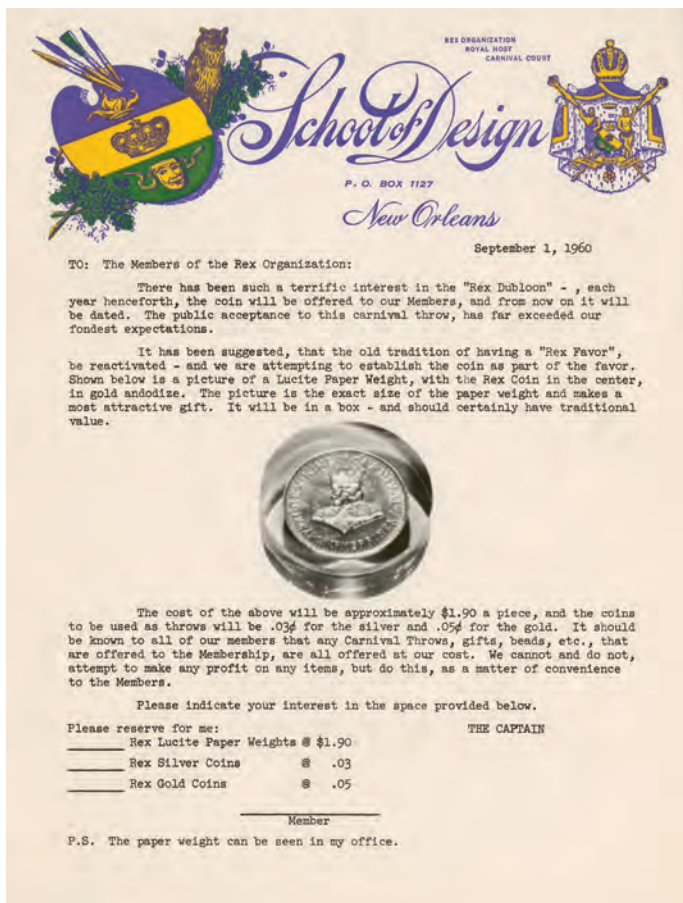
An artist and artisan of many media, he’d been peddling a big idea for five years with no luck, pitching festivals across the country and abroad on a new type of commemorative keepsake. Taking one last swing, he wrote a letter to one of the city’s elite Carnival krewes, Rex, describing his vision: “I have designed some very beautiful ‘doublons’ that can be coined in soft aluminum (gold or bright) very cheaply. I feel that these ‘Rex coins’ would be a sensation as a memento of Mardi Gras.”

The Rex organization responded, and in December 1959 Sharpe walked into the office of Rex’s captain, the prominent financial manager Darwin Fenner, ready to give up the grind if it didn’t work out. “Truthfully, I had tried to interest everyone I could think of in this idea of the doubloon,” he told the *Times-Picayune* in 1965. “When I went to the captain of Rex that day, I said, “This is my last stop.”

Fenner was interested, but he expressed concern about the prospect of tossing metal discs at parade-goers. “They were afraid of getting sued,” Sharpe said. In response, the artist “tossed a handful in his [Fenner’s] face, to show you couldn’t get hurt.” Sharpe’s proof of concept prevailed. “He took one look and bought the idea.”

Rex ordered 80,000 aluminum doublons for Mardi Gras 1960, as well as 29 silver ones for special members of the krewe, and they were an instant hit. One of those inaugural doublons, as well as Sharpe’s artist proof and Rex manuscripts about the new throw, will be on display at the Williams Research Center as part of *Fit for a King: The Rex Archives at THNOC*, a companion exhibition to *Making Mardi Gras* at 520 Royal Street.

Within just a few years of the throw’s debut, virtually every big krewe in the city was tossing doublons, many of them featuring Sharpe’s hand-engraved designs. A thriving collector’s market emerged, complete with fan clubs and annual checklists accounting for every doubloon on offer. Doubloon mania grew throughout the 1960s and ’70s, inviting both adults and children to join the hunt; today, many an attic in greater New Orleans has a binder or two filled with the spoils carefully preserved between sheets of plastic. Active collectors remain, as well. The Crescent City Doubloon Traders Club meets for swaps eight to 10 times a year, and Sharpe doublons, artist proofs, and etchings routinely sell on eBay.

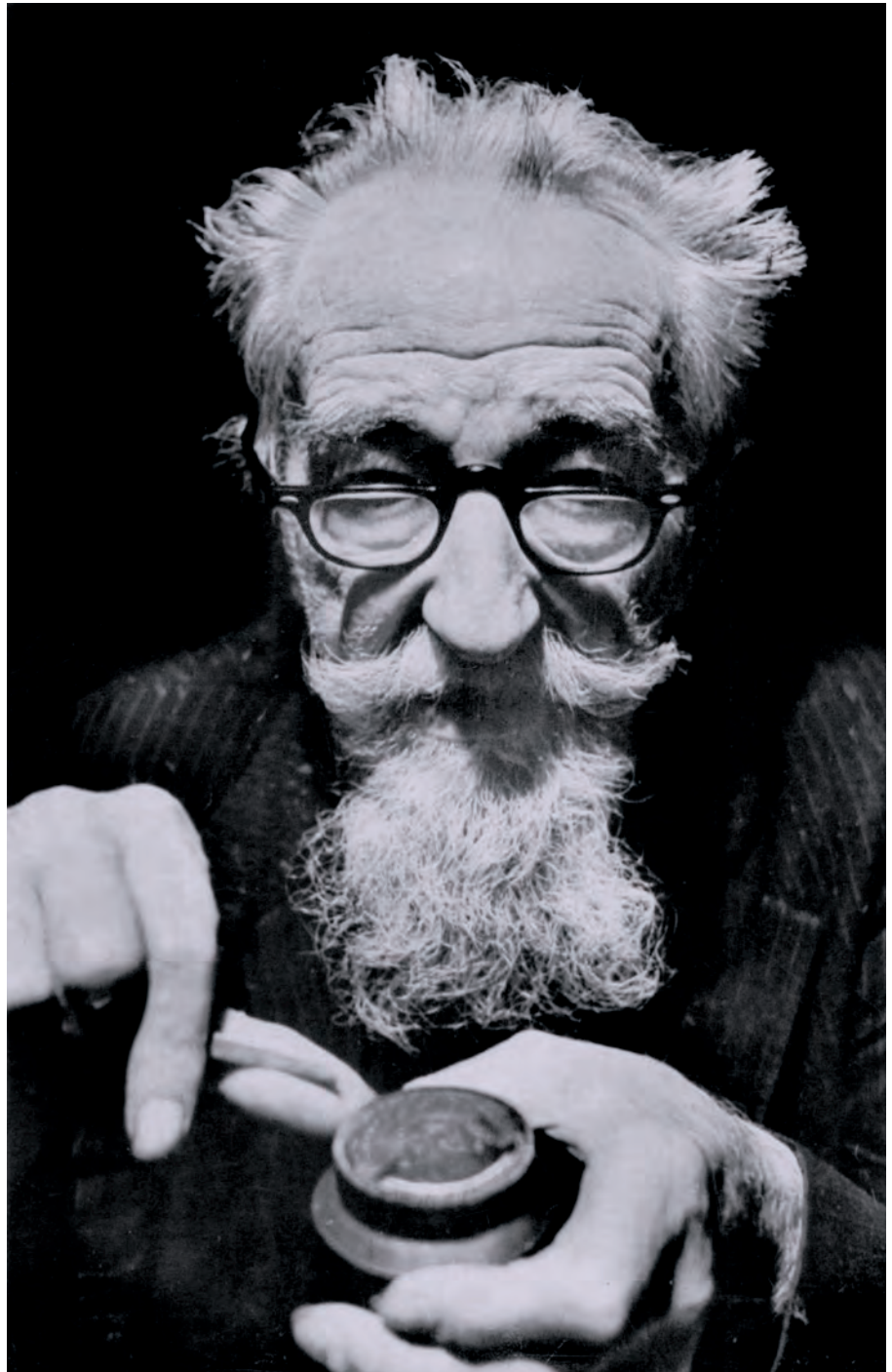


B

What's more, with the invention of the Mardi Gras doubloon, Sharpe catapulted the entire notion of signature throws into mainstream popularity. Previously, throws consisted of beads and trinkets with no distinguishing marks particular to each krewe. One exception was Zulu: the club introduced its signature throw, coconuts, in 1910, but they were undecorated (and untapped, making them far heavier than today's coconuts). It's unclear when the club started adorning the "golden nuggets" with the Zulu name. Now, krewe-specific medallions, cups, shoes, purses, and more comprise a huge proportion of the millions of throws tossed from floats in a typical Carnival season.

To lovers of Carnival lore, Sharpe is fondly known as the "father of the Carnival doubloon," and rightfully so. But the artist was much more than the trinket that earned him a place in the history books, and his drive in selling the idea wasn't born of hucksterism or gimmickry. In addition to being a painter, engraver, and master of intaglio (the 6,000-year-old process of stamping a design in relief from a hand-incised die), Sharpe was a seaman, world traveler, poet, philosopher, and autodidact. A true renaissance man, he had an insatiable appetite for experience and knowledge. He was an antimaterialist who valued craft and curiosity over fame and fortune, working deep into the night to realize a design or write a poem.

"He is the only person I have ever met in my 53 years who was a genius," said Dukes Richardson, Sharpe's close friend, following the artist's death in 1982. "If you ever met him you would have to say that he was the most interesting person you had ever met."

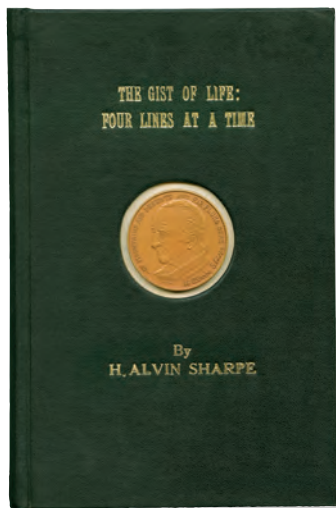


Herbert Alvin Sharpe was born January 20, 1910, in Corbin, Kentucky, a small town just outside Daniel Boone National Forest. The self-described "hillbilly" was always drawn to art and adventure, picking up woodcarving and playing hooky from school to pursue his own interests out of doors. He was "one of those backwoods boys who used to jump out the one-room schoolhouse window to go look at rocks with a magnifying glass," wrote Nancy Weldon after interviewing Sharpe in 1981, near the end of his life, for Arthur Hardy's annual *Mardi Gras Guide*. "He kept his gun, knife, and camping gear hidden outside."

"Sometimes they wouldn't find me for two days," Sharpe told her.

He left school at 13 and worked writing stories for the local newspaper, but the call of the wild persisted. In particular, he was fascinated by the ocean, and at age 14 he made

C. H. Alvin Sharpe at work
ca. 1982; photograph
courtesy of the Times-Picayune | New Orleans
Advocate



D

D. *The Gist of Life: Four Lines at a Time*

by H. Alvin Sharpe, author; Christy Beck, editor
[New Orleans, LA]: H. Alvin Sharpe, 1974
2001-120-RL.3

E. *Toulouse Street Court, Old New Orleans*

aquatint with etching
by H. Alvin Sharpe (collection of Stephen
Goldfarb)
from *Imprinting the South: Southern Printmakers
and Their Images of the Region, 1920s–1940s*
(University of Alabama Press, 2007)
2011.0160.2



E

his way to New Orleans in search of the seafaring life. “You can’t sail a ship in the hills of Kentucky,” he said. There, he got work on a cargo ship and sailed around the world for the next seven years. During that time, he used the long stretches at sea to read, write poetry, and make art. “He read everything,” wrote Kenneth Gormin, a friend and public relations specialist who contributed the preface to Sharpe’s first collection of poetry, *The Gist of Life: Four Lines at a Time*, published in 1974. “His taste was catholic—books about travel and adventure, art, coinage, commerce, history, religion. It didn’t matter—Al read what he could get his hands on when he was at sea or on land.”

His early seafaring years also gave him his name, in a way. Sharpe was tall (ships’ registers list him as an even six feet) but slight of frame; when he joined up, he was probably the youngest person on many a crew, which earned him the unwelcome nickname “Little Herbie.” After getting into several altercations about it with his crewmates, he adopted his middle name and relegated the “Herbert” to an initial. Decades later, his “HAS” artist’s stamp graces millions of doubloons worldwide.

Sharpe worked in the modest medium of pencil sketches at first, but he soon found his aptitude as a draftsman could support a career. While in port, he sold his drawings of ships and seascapes to tourists. “I was getting \$25 for a pencil sketch when the best French artist might get \$50 for an oil painting,” he said. “That was big money.”

Another side hustle was gem prospecting. A lover and student of rocks since childhood, he learned by reading books and listening to fellow sailors in the game. “He uncovered finds of opals in dry riverbeds in Australia,” Gormin wrote. “He traded emeralds, rubies, and other rare gems with Russian, Norwegian, and Greek seamen.”

More than precious stones, though, Sharpe “prospected for history . . . and learned much about mankind,” as Gormin put it. “It wasn’t enough to read about them.” He was driven by pure lust for life and a desire to know the world and its people.

At various points during his teens, he enrolled in three different art schools but was “thrown out the first day,” he said. “Every school I went to, they’d all turned modernist”—and Sharpe was thoroughly traditional in his style.

Those formative years gave Sharpe the confidence to establish himself as a working artist after he returned to New Orleans in 1931. Initially, he was “just passing through” between stints at sea, but then a friend invited him to play bridge in Lakeview, where he met 20-year-old Beverly Henderson. It must have been some game. “By about four in the morning, I’d proposed,” he said.

By 1934, Sharpe not only had a wife and a baby daughter, Lynn Joanne; he’d also become a rising talent in the commercial art world. The Roosevelt Hotel bought a number of his etchings to adorn its halls (by the end of his life, according to his obituary, he’d placed approximately 600 of his works there), and his paintings of ships decorated local riverboats.

Early on Sharpe displayed a knack for getting the attention of powerful people. In 1937 he approached an executive for Chicago and Southern Air Lines to propose a publicity stunt: painting the Mississippi River from the air. The airline accepted,



and on the morning of April 14 he boarded a Lockheed Electra at Shushan Airport (now the New Orleans Lakefront Airport), “donning his smock, spreading his canvas and placing his brushes and paints and palettes before him,” the *States-Item* reported. Sharpe completed his trip up the Mississippi to Chicago and back in 14 hours—six hours there, a two-hour stop to refuel, and six hours back—which, at the time, was “something of a record,” according to the *States-Item*.

The same year, Sharpe completed the biggest commission of his young career: eight 12-foot-high murals radiating around the domed skylight of the historic Board of Trade building at 316 Magazine Street. Sharpe was paid \$5,500 for the project, which took three months to finish; each mural depicted a different New Orleans industry, such as sulfur, coffee, shipping, telecommunications, public utilities, and transportation. Upon completion, though, the scaffolding was removed so quickly that Sharpe never had a chance to sign his name.

Sharpe chased opportunity, but he seemed to shy away from acclaim. He became the toast of the Spring Fiesta when his etching *Where Trees Bend Low and Friendly* won top prize at the festival’s art competition in 1941. Speaking to an *Item-Tribune* reporter, he was almost apologetic: “It’ll be years yet before I’ll have anything really worthwhile,” he said. “I don’t see why anyone should want to take a picture of the etching or of me either. I’ve got at least a couple of decades of hard work before I’ll begin to have anything on the ball.”

Sharpe’s words were, in retrospect, prescient. He would spend the next few years in the US Merchant Marine, serving in World War II. One account claims that he saw action in both the Atlantic and the Pacific arenas, another that he helped smuggle Jewish refugees out of Europe. One night, he said, his dead sister came to him in a dream and

F and G. **Sharpe boards a Lockheed Electra to paint the Mississippi River from the sky for Chicago and Southern Air Lines**
1937; photographs
courtesy of the Times-Picayune | New Orleans Advocate

H. **Murals depicting different New Orleans industries, radiating around the domed skylight of the Board of Trade building, 316 Magazine Street**
1937
by H. Alvin Sharpe, painter
photograph by Keely Merritt



H



I. Doubleloon price guide

1972; pamphlet
by Lazard, compiler
courtesy of eBay

J. Studio proof bar for doubleloon commemorating 250 years of Louisiana rice

1969; silver
by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist
gift of Paul J. Leaman Jr., 2003.0181.3



told him to get up for his shift on board. Even though he had hours until his duty started, he did as she said; shortly afterward, a torpedo blasted through his cabin. Following the war he remained a seaman for at least four years, making stops in Scotland, Fiji, Panama, and Japan.

His wandering continued in the 1950s, as he took prospecting trips for gold out West with a New Orleans friend named Gaspar. When not traveling, he took a spin as a furniture maker, selling “tap-root tables” made from slabs of tree stumps.

How Sharpe’s family felt about his many extended excursions isn’t part of the historical record: neither Beverly nor the couple’s daughter ever spoke about Sharpe on the record except after his death. Beverly described him as “a unique man” and said “there was really nothing he couldn’t do,” but that statement and a couple of reported anecdotes comprise the extent of her public commentary about her husband. City directories show that she took a job as a saleswoman at D. H. Holmes Department Store in 1945, during Sharpe’s WWII service, and she seems to have held the job (whether continuously or in stints) through the mid-1950s. She died in 1993. Lynn Joanne Celestin became a well-loved piano teacher and mother of six children; she died in 2013.

Sharpe had taught himself intaglio engraving back in the 1930s, but he doesn’t seem to have deployed the skill at any government-run mint. Sharpe tried for years to sell his idea of aluminum doubleloons, but “nobody listened,” he said—no one until he met with the captain of Rex that day in 1959.

The idea of doubleloons arrived so late in the planning of Carnival 1960 that Rex didn’t have a chance to alert even the riders in the parade, much less the press or public. On Mardi Gras Day, Sharpe was in the Rex queen’s viewing stand on St. Charles Avenue, where word of the new trinket started spreading even before the parade arrived. “There were reports coming in from Jackson Avenue that the maskers were throwing something new,” Sharpe recalled. “Some of the maskers were so excited by the doubleloons that they threw them all early in the parade without saving any for later. . . . Before the day was over, they had caused a sensation.” Over the following months, he received calls from around the country—people asking how to get their hands on a doubleloon.

Later that year, in response to the success of the new throw, Sharpe was made a founding partner in Educoin, a new doubleloon-production company. His role, of course, was to create the designs, and Educoin facilitated the outsourcing of mass production to facilities in Ohio and Mississippi. In 1964, seeing a hole in the market, the president of a local gear-making company, John Barr, created Barco Mint, the city’s first doubleloon factory. Rex moved its business over from Educoin, a move that Sharpe regarded as a betrayal at the time. “I’ve felt contempt but not bitterness,” he said decades later of the situation.

The craze for doubleloons extended beyond Mardi Gras and its fans. Commemorative coins experienced a surge in popularity nationwide, with a handful of commercial mints around the country cranking out decorative medallions marketed to consumers as keepsakes and investments. “There’s a renaissance in medals now, and it started because of New Orleans,” Sharpe said in 1976, a banner year for commemorative coins because

of the bicentennial of the United States’ independence.

These commercial mints typically offered subscription services for devoted collectors, and from 1969 to 1971 Sharpe did so as well, through the newly created Louisiana Medallion Society. Sharpe functioned essentially as a one-man mint, hand-casting “fine silver medallions” that depicted popular people and scenes from local history—La Salle claiming Louisiana

for France, Bienville’s founding of New Orleans, the Battle of New Orleans.

After Educoin folded in the mid-1970s, Sharpe worked for a stint at the newly created New Orleans branch of the Hamilton Mint, a commemorative-coin company, but for the most part he remained a freelance artist, and he preferred it that way. He worked freehand, often doing his metal etchings straight from his imagination after hours spent waiting for inspiration to strike. A night owl and chain-smoker, he would hole up in his West Bank office, which was cluttered with tools, books, and papers. Friends, journalists, and collectors frequently popped in, and he was always happy to stop his work to talk or spin a yarn.

As his media exposure grew over the 1960s and ’70s, Sharpe spoke about his craft with the reverence of a true believer and a strong dose of humility. He often rebuffed accolades about being the “inventor” of the doubloon: “Doubloon? Yeah, I was the stupid ass who started that,” he told *New Orleans* magazine in 1977. “The Romans and Greeks had this idea many years ago,” he said in another interview. “I just revived it.”

Indeed, it was reading about early Western civilization while in his mariner days that first planted the seed of the idea. “The ancients had made medals representing generals and leaders and threw them to the people,” he said. He often called doubloons medallions, which is technically what they are—historically, “doubloon” refers to a Spanish gold coin.

Though they were undoubtedly trendy at the time, Sharpe saw doubloons as timeless. “First, and above all else, a medal should be good art in the classic sense and not gimmicky or faddish,” he said. “Medals, after all, will still be around as a witness to our civilization perhaps thousands of years from now, longer than most other art forms.”

While he acknowledged that the aluminum of most Carnival doubloons would degrade more easily than medals made of silver or copper, he maintained that doubloons provided a material record of human civilization superior to all other media. “If you preserve with a photograph or print, in a few years it will be gone,” he said in 1981. For this reason, in part, his Zulu doubloons spotlighted a different African tribe or kingdom each year, showing a member wearing their finery in profile. Many of Sharpe’s other krewe designs depict historical figures, and he took particular pleasure in designing for the Krewe of Poseidon; each year’s doubloon featured a different type of historical ship.

“Human nature doesn’t change,” he said. “People have been collecting coins and medals for over 2,000 years. They always will, too. You never see a medal in a garbage can, do you?”

In the final years of his life, Sharpe went almost completely blind, his field of vision reduced to a slit as thin as the medallions that made his name. *Mardi Gras Guide* reporter Nancy Weldon remarked that he had to turn his head this way and that during their conversation to get a composite picture of her. His long white beard was thin and tussled, and one 1977 account mentioned his “toothless gums.”

Sharpe was living with his daughter on the West Bank and was suffering from an undiagnosed, terminal illness. He had refused to see a doctor his entire life and didn’t see the need to start then. Speaking in September 1982, he knew his time was limited: “I was born on the night of Halley’s Comet,” he told Dana Standish of *Gambit*. “Legend has it that those born on that night will live until the comet comes again to take them away. . . . I’m not going to make it that long.”

He made it just long enough to see the New Orleans Board of Trade rediscover and commend him for his painting of the murals, five days before his death. Sharpe had



K



K. Chucalissa commemorative medallion between 1960 and 1970; bronze by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist gift of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Weiss, 1999.76.13

L. “Big Shot of Africa” Zulu doubloon proof between 1963 and 1970; bronze by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist 1968.44.24.2



L



M. **WYES-TV commemorative medallion**
between 1960 and 1975; bronze
by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist
gift of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Weiss, 1999.76.18

N. **Medallion adorning the cover of Sharpe's
Collected Meditations**
created for 1979; bronze
by H. Alvin Sharpe, medalist
gift of Patricia McWhorter Tusa, 86-388-RL



M

devoted the last half of his life to stamping medals in part because he believed they would last for the ages—tiny metal monuments bearing his artwork and initials. Facing death, however, Sharpe seemed to realize that all things must pass. “I don’t know whether I’ll go down in history as an artist or not,” he said in his last interview. “I’ll probably go down as just a deluded old man.”

Such concern with legacy must have been natural, given his condition, but it stands at odds with the life he led. In his youth he followed the wind, hopping off ships to explore any port of call that caught his interest. Always privileging the journey over the destination, he seemed to value each day as an opportunity to learn, create, and worship the wide world. “He is what many of us would like to be—a contributor to the beauty, the art, and the understanding in a world that knows so little peace and where so many think only in terms of what its dollar value may be,” wrote Kenneth Gormin.

This deep reverence for human experience is best found in Sharpe’s poetry. He never considered himself a poet, though he amassed over 500 works; rather, he claimed to be a lifelong sufferer of “severe reoccurring attacks of ‘versitis.’” Friends helped him compile and publish 50 of his poems in 1974, with a second edition published as *Collected Meditations* in 1979. They range from lighthearted—the delight of eating “old-fashioned cheddar cheese” or the pleasure of spotting a pretty girl—to moralistic, such as one poem denouncing the ignorance of bigotry. Sharpe was not a religious man in the traditional churchgoing sense, but he was spiritual, and poetry provided a means to express his deepest convictions. In “Ten Talbas’a,” he proclaims his belief in the godliness of “every living creature” and the responsibility of each person to honor their existence by making something beautiful of it.

*I believe in a God universal,
Omnipotent in life, space and time.
His goodness encompassing and
ageless,*

*This God, this God of mine.
And ours a single obligation
(We are his potters at hand)
To shape our life, (his vessel)
And place upon it his brand.*

—MOLLY REID CLEAVER



N



A

Here, Now, Then

Dawoud Bey makes his New Orleans debut at THNOC, with a pair of installations focused on the historical and visual landscapes of the plantation South.

*Someone's praying
someone's praying
someone's pain
someone's brain
someone's praying*

The whispers multiply and fade in and out, snaking like fragments of a dream. A rattle shakes. Sugarcane leaves sway in the breeze. A cry pierces the incantation—high, sharp, cracking as it grows more pained. Keening, the soprano voice soars above the plantation grounds, as high as the old live oaks overhead. The camera slowly pans underneath, looking up into the fractal forms against the sky. Silent vestiges of the past, the oaks stand witness.

We saw it all, they seem to say. We saw everything.

This ghostly meditation is *Evergreen*, a triptych video installation by the photographer Dawoud Bey in collaboration with vocalist and composer Imani Uzuri. The enveloping work is on view at The Historic New Orleans Collection as part of the citywide art exhibition *Prospect.5: Yesterday We Said Tomorrow*. Bey, a native of Queens, New York, and a current Chicagoan, is a longtime star of the art world, known for his reverent depictions of Black life in America. *Evergreen* and *In This Here Place*, a photographic complement to the video installation, are his first major projects inspired by and shown in New Orleans, and he has trained his lens on four former plantations in the river parishes.

PROSPECT.5 EXHIBITIONS AT THNOC

Dawoud Bey: *In This Here Place* and *Evergreen*

520 Royal Street

George Dureau: *Photographs* (curated by Grace Deveney)

520 Royal Street

Josh Kun: *Over and Over the Waves*

533 Royal Street

On view through January 23, 2022

Free

A. A visitor takes in Dawoud Bey's large-format photographs from *In This Here Place* while the complementary video installation *Evergreen* is projected on the adjoining wall.



B

B. Irrigation Ditch

2019; silver gelatin print mounted to dibond
by Dawoud Bey
image courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

C. Tree and Cabin

2019; silver gelatin print mounted to dibond
by Dawoud Bey
image courtesy of the artist and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York

Evergreen, full of saturated color and named for the plantation where it was filmed, is projected at one end of the Tricentennial Wing’s Scovern Gallery, while the rest of the space is occupied by the large-format black-and-white photographs that comprise *In This Here Place*.

“For me, first of all, the work is a kind of deep witnessing,” Bey said, speaking at the October 23 opening of Prospect.5, the fifth iteration of Prospect New Orleans. “It’s about being in these places, and being there and wanting to visualize them in a way that makes them engaging.” That engagement, Bey said, is deeply tied to the history of those sites—what they represent to not only Black America but all America. “We’re talking about the foundation of the economic structure of this country,” he said.

Bey opted not to depict the “big house” at any of the sites, nor did he capture people in the images. Rather, he provides long, lingering glances at the natural surroundings and dwellings that were inhabited by enslaved people, always from a respectful remove but close enough to see the grain of the wood steps and the detailed shadows across their cladding. He dwelled on *Evergreen* in particular because it is the only plantation in the Deep South that features multiple original, extant slave cabins—22 of them, spread out over the grounds. “*Evergreen* is the most undisturbed plantation landscape in the country,” Bey said. “The other plantations I photographed . . . they’re constructed largely in concern for a visitor experience that can be completed in a half hour. *Evergreen*, on the other hand, remains exactly as it has been since it was built.

“There’s a presence that you feel when you’re at *Evergreen* that is undeniable. There is a spirit that clings to that site more heavily than any of the other sites.”

Bey’s photographs also take the viewer through sugarcane fields and swamps, filling the entire frame with a historically informed sense of place. Scale—the large-format photographs, each one several feet in width and height, set against black walls and low lighting—was an important consideration. “If you stand very close to them, it kind of shuts out the rest of the world,” Bey said. “It becomes more experience-driven than just about that object of the photograph. . . . Scale, for me, is about creating a very particular and intentional kind of relationship between the viewer and the narrative that’s enveloped in the vision.”

The narratives of the plantation past are “very complex,” and they cannot be defined solely by the anguish and horror of slavery, Bey said. “Resistance is also a part of the landscape of the plantation, along with the history of the vibrant musical culture that comes out of the plantation—those songs and inspiration, aspiration and resistance.” Uzuri, in her score for *Evergreen*, incorporates an array of elements of Black musical culture: gourd shakers, handclaps and leg pats, spirituals, opera, and prayer.

“My intention is to provoke a conversation about that history that leads to conversation about the complexities of those narratives and how those narratives are very much a part of the contemporary moment,” Bey said.

“Or, as I like to say, history explains everything. There are no mysteries. History explains everything.” —MOLLY

REID CLEAVER



C

OFF-SITE

The Monarch of Merriment Celebrates 150 Years



Our roundup of holdings that have appeared outside The Collection, either on loan to other institutions or in noteworthy media projects.

The **Louisiana State Museum** borrowed 33 items related to the Rex organization for its exhibition *Rex: The 150th Anniversary of the School of Design*, opening January 29, 2022.

Statue of Rex and pages
between 1872 and 1971; painted porcelain
gift of the School of Design, 1979.208.117

Elizabeth Lorraine Maginnis, queen of Rex
1908; photograph
gift of the School of Design, 1979.208.102



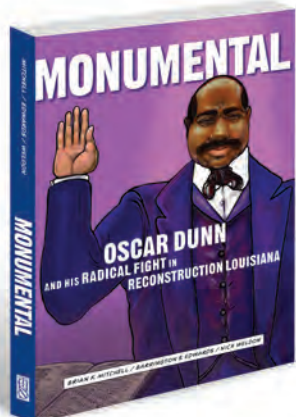
Scepter held by Brooke H. Duncan, Rex
created for Carnival 1971; rhinestone, gold alloy
gift of the School of Design, 1979.208.116



As part of a new partnership between The Historic New Orleans Collection and **One Book One New Orleans** (OBONO), THNOC's 2021 book *Monumental* will be distributed free to hundreds of readers across Greater New Orleans via events and programs put on by OBONO and affiliates such as the Literacy Alliance of Greater New Orleans, Louisiana Books 2 Prisoners, and the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternate Settings.

Monumental: Oscar Dunn and His Radical Fight in Reconstruction Louisiana

by Brian K. Mitchell, author; Barrington S. Edwards, illustrator; and Nick Weldon, editor
New Orleans: The Historic New Orleans Collection, 2021



New York's **Metropolitan Museum of Art** has borrowed a greatcoat from THNOC's holdings—one worn by enslaved people in the domestic service of William Newton Mercer, a Mississippi planter—for the exhibition *Once Upon a Time in America: Untold Stories*, opening May 2, 2022.

Greatcoat worn by a person enslaved by Dr. William Newton Mercer

between 1857 and 1865; wool with silver and pewter buttons and silk, wool, cotton, and linen lining
by Brooks Brothers, manufacturer
2013.0138



Prospect New Orleans at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art has borrowed one object for an installation as part of *Prospect.5: Yesterday We Said Tomorrow*, on view through January 23, 2022.

Mirror

between 1920 and 1930
by Borghese Productions, maker
bequest of Clarisse Claiborne Grima, 1981.376.103

ONLINE

***Dancing in the Streets*
Club Narratives**

presented in collaboration with
the Neighborhood Story Project
www.hnoc.org/dits-club-narratives



A

A. Young Men Olympian Jr. parade

1959
by John Bernard, photographer
*The John Bernard Photographic Archive
at The Historic New Orleans Collection,
1999.41.3.48*

**B. Versatile Ladies of Style at the Tremé
Center before coming out**

2016
by Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee, photographer
courtesy of Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee



B

Stories from the First Line

A new collection of narratives, created with the Neighborhood Story Project, presents members of New Orleans's second line clubs in their own words.

For the spectators who walk and dance along with them, the annual second line parades put on by New Orleans's social aid and pleasure clubs are four hours of music, pageantry, and celebration. For club members and their families, they are much more. They're the culmination of a full year of preparation: fundraising, obtaining permits, choosing themes and colors, making regalia, hiring bands, and mapping out routes. They are also a living legacy, a means of maintaining and building on centuries-old cultural traditions and passing them on to future generations.

Created in partnership with the Neighborhood Story Project (NSP) and published on THNOC's website, a new collection of narratives explores the past and future of second lining through interviews with more than 30 founders, presidents, and longtime members of African American parading organizations. The original interviews, conducted and transcribed from September 2020 to March 2021, informed a number of elements within THNOC's 2021 exhibition *Dancing in the Streets*, but the story didn't end there. In line with her organization's commitment to collaborative ethnography, NSP cofounder and director Rachel Breunlin followed up with each interviewee to hone their conversations into fully formed narratives.

The collection is illustrated by photographs from THNOC's permanent

collection, as well as images contributed by many second line photographers who have relationships with the clubs. Each narrative stands on its own, but taken together, the collection explores the interrelated lineages of parading organizations and the neighborhood traditions and practices of second line parades. The project also serves as a model for pursuing ethnographic research and documentation in ways that respect culture bearers not only as sources or subjects but also as authors of their own histories.

For example, Black Men of Labor member Fred Johnson was candid in his discussion of clubs' frustration with some of the photographers who profit from documenting their parades. "When you produce something like a second line, you have so many photographers who follow you, and they have the right to photograph all of what they want when you're in the public domain. We realized early on that we couldn't stop them, but we could make certain that from beginning to end we had our own personal photographer who would not turn around and try to sell us our own photographs."

Certain topics recur in multiple narratives: how clubs get started, choose members, and prepare for parading. Members discuss threats to the tradition: Hurricane Katrina, gentrification, violence. They look to the future, sharing plans for upcoming years and ways of bringing children and grandchildren into the fold. But each narrative also reflects a unique experience and perspective. In his story, Norman Dixon Jr., president of the city's oldest existing second line club, the Young Men Olympian Jr., discusses the long history of the organization, which was founded in the 1880s. Spirit 2 Da Street member Tyrone "Pie" Stevenson focuses on how his club incorporates Mardi Gras Indian traditions into second lining. In discussing the founding of the Versatile Ladies of Style, Cheryl Ann Roberts shines light on how women's place in the tradition has changed over the years.

The narratives are also a record of how the pandemic has affected the community. Of special note is the Uptown Swingers's remembrance of longtime club president Ezell Hines Sr. "Zell," as he was known, died on November 1, 2020—a Sunday, the traditional day for second lines. "His favorite day of the week," the Swingers said in their narrative, featuring Ezell "Moe" Hines Jr., Terrance "Buck" Fields, and Tammy Hines. The inclusion of photographs provided by the Ezell Hines family archive gives an especially intimate look into the club and highlights one of the themes woven throughout almost all of the narratives: how deeply embedded second line clubs are in communities and families.

Tammy Hines, Ezell's wife, recounted sharing the news of her late husband's death: "When I called his club members that Sunday morning, they were coming in there crying; they were on their knees." Zell's son, Moe, told her that he'd be there whenever the pandemic allowed the Swingers to parade again. "I'm going to do the number one more time for my daddy," he said. "We're going to wear those colors for him because that's what he wanted to do." —TERRI SIMON and ERIC SEIFERTH



C. Tyrone "Pie" Stevenson of Spirit 2 Da Street crafting decorations

2015
by Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee, photographer
courtesy of Ryan Hodgson-Rigsbee

D. Ezell Hines

1970s
courtesy of the Ezell Hines family archive

E. Tammy and Ezell Hines at home

1984
courtesy of the Ezell Hines family archive





ON THE JOB

Amy Dailey Williams

POSITION: Programming coordinator, on staff since 2020

ASSIGNMENT: Adapt the 2021–22 Food Forum to serve both virtual and in-person audiences

How do we draw an audience to an experience? What’s the story we’re telling with that experience, and how can we make it different from other stories that have explored similar subjects? These are the questions the programming department asks every day, about every event we produce, regardless of whether it’s virtual or in-person.

I joined The Collection with lots of experience producing events for cultural institutions in New Orleans, including the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, the New Orleans Film Society and Festival, and the New Orleans Photo Alliance/PhotoNOLA. However, none of that programming experience included a pandemic. By the time I joined the team, THNOC’s programming had already gone through a huge transition adapting to the constraints of COVID-19. It wasn’t just pivoting to video: staff members across the organization spent the early months of lockdown developing new web features such as History from Home, virtual events, and social media programs to engage with our audience.

Today’s programming truth, though, is that what was relevant to people at home in lockdown is not necessarily relevant today. We now design programs that safely draw people back to The Collection while simultaneously reaching those who are still at home or not local. We’re planning two major events—the Williams Research Center Symposium in January and the 2021–22 Food Forum—that will follow a new hybrid model to address this challenge. Both events will combine in-person and virtual components that will be available on our YouTube channel.

We know how to do in-person events already—that was our primary model for decades, and we do it well. But for virtual programming, we’re drawing on lessons learned the hard way over the past 18 months, and we’re getting better and better. It’s not enough to just press record, broadcast a lecture, and expect people to be interested.

You need to build a story—a beginning, middle, and end—and this is truer of virtual events than in-person programs by leaps and bounds. You have to work harder to engage an audience. We want people to talk with us and play games with us so they’re part of the experience. That’s a paradigm shift for us all—producers *and* audience members. A lot of the people who come to our in-person events, especially an all-day event in the French Quarter, are already superfans. People at home might click on something out of mild curiosity, and we need to find a way to hold them and get to know them.

I’ve basically had to become a video producer in addition to an event producer. For example, when planning a tribute to Morgus the Magnificent, we invited the daughter of Sid Noel Rideau, who played Morgus, as well as former crew members, to talk with WWL-TV’s Eric Paulsen about what it was like behind the scenes of the television show. We shot this

For a virtual event dedicated to the beloved character Morgus the Magnificent, the programming team filmed former crew members and the daughter of Sid Noel Rideau in conversation about Morgus and his legacy.



segment in advance, and then screened it as a lead-in to *Recollections of a Mad Scientist*, the character's swan song. We ended the event with a live Q&A session over Zoom, then shared it on Facebook, where Morgus fans continue to watch, discuss, and share the program.

Through this period, we've learned the importance of self-critique, and of rethinking institutional traditions. For eight years, we've staged an annual culinary symposium, focused on the food and foodways of the Gulf South, in partnership with celebrated food historian Jessica B. Harris. Rather than simply take our traditional all-day model online, we decided to break up the 2021–22 Food Forum into four separate events. A seasonal schedule gives us the flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing pandemic environment, while also providing our audience more options, hopefully allowing us to expand our outreach.

The first installment of "Celebrating the Seasons," held in November, explored street food with a pre-taped segment that put street chefs in conversation with chef Kevin Belton. Scott "Sparky" Sparks, the "New Orleans King of Tailgating," talked about his love of South Louisiana foods—jambalaya, étouffée, boudin—and his dedication to community; anyone is welcome to attend the giant tailgate he hosts every home Saints game. Aquanette "Ackie" Singleton, a longtime vendor at second line parades, discussed her family's multigenerational connection to the second line community. And another video segment showed the food distribution that took place locally after Hurricane Ida. Finally, as a dessert course, we hosted an in-person tailgate-themed party in the Brulatour Courtyard—a fitting conclusion to a celebration of food and togetherness.

It took an enormous amount of work to research and book speakers, manage production schedules, hire a crew, secure a location, and oversee content and post-production edits, but that's all part of my job. Our goal was to connect these amazing culinary individuals with the public, and I love being part of the team that made it happen.

The pre-taped content lives on our YouTube Channel and can be used to generate interest in future installations of the Food Forum. The winter edition will focus on king cake and the foods of Têt, or Vietnamese New Year. In the spring, we'll talk to the food director of the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and organizers of a large powwow in South Louisiana. And the summer will be all about snowballs, daiquiris, and other favorite ways to beat the heat.

Though the pandemic has been a time of terrible loss and hardship, it has also allowed us to forge new connections. In-person events, our old programming standbys, can be magical for



A film crew shoots Chef Kevin Belton in conversation with Scott "Sparky" Sparks, the "New Orleans King of Tailgating," for a segment featured in the fall edition of THNOC's 2021–22 Food Forum.

Amy Dailey Williams dons black and gold for the tailgate party that capped off the fall edition of the Food Forum.



COMMUNITY

attendees—but their reach is often limited and the experience ephemeral. Today, we're utilizing new platforms to reach wider audiences with content that will become part of The Collection's publicly accessible institutional record.

In addition, the push to produce these multifaceted events has inspired more internal and external collaboration. The Collection's staff is truly our greatest resource: I work with close to 150 professionals who each love New Orleans as much as I

do and have skills and expertise on subjects across the board and myriad connections with partner institutions and individuals. The programming team produces our best work when we're collaborating with and for our community. —AMY DAILEY WILLIAMS

STAFF NEWS

New Hires

Rachael Brown, human resources assistant. **Zahir Euceda**, maintenance associate. **Louis Evans**, facilities engineer. **Nicole Johnson**, stewardship and administrative coordinator. **Brian Moore**, programming coordinator.

Changes

Candy Ellison is now interactive/interface designer. **ThaiBao Vu** is now security dispatcher.

Awards

In September **Alfred E. Lemmon**, director of the Williams Research Center, received the 2021 I. Bruce Turner Distinguished Service Award from the Louisiana Archives and Manuscripts Association.

Publications

Libby Neidenbach, visitor services trainer, contributed a chapter to a new scholarly book—"Inhabitant of Saint-Domingue, Today Refugee in This Place": Atlantic Networks and the Contours of Migration among Free Women of Color during the Haitian Revolution," in *Crossings and Encounters: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Atlantic World*, edited by Laura R. Prieto and Stephen R. Berry (University of South Carolina Press, 2020).

Professional Development

Interpretation Assistants **Cecilia Hock**, **Dylan Jordan**, **Kurt Owens**, **Joanna Robinson**, and **George Schindler IV** all received certification by the National Association for Interpretation as Certified Interpretive Guides.

Libby Neidenbach received an Interpreting African American History and Culture certification from the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Speaking Engagements

Editor **Molly Reid Cleaver** presented a paper at the Conference on the Music of Carnival, hosted virtually in October by the Instituto de Etnomusicologia at Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal) and Ryerson University (Canada). Cleaver discussed Danny Barker's Mardi Gras Indian-inspired recordings from 1953 and their parallels with another Carnival release from the same year, Johnny Wiggs's version of "If Ever I Cease to Love."

Collections Processor **Roxanne Guidry**, Curatorial Cataloger **Emily Perkins**, Head of Reader Services and Technical Processing **Rebecca Smith**, and Curator/Historian **Eric Seiferth** recently conducted several on-site "show and tell" sessions with members of the Sudan and Money Wasters Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs. Perkins and Guidry displayed and shared details about some of THNOC's collections related to the history of SAPCs and benevolent societies as part of The Collection's SAPC Research Working Group.

John H. Lawrence, who recently retired as the head of museum programs, participated in a panel discussion related to Pierre Clément de Laussat. The event was hosted by Les Amis, a French heritage organization based in St. Louis, Missouri. Lawrence also appeared virtually at the Louisiana Book Festival in

October to discuss his essay contribution to *New Orleans Portrayed*, a photography book by David G. Spielman published in 2020.

Reference Associate **Jari C. Honora** and **Libby Neidenbach** both presented papers at a panel on Black Catholic education at the annual Southern Historical Association conference, held virtually in November. As part of the same conference, Neidenbach participated in a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Southern Association for Women Historians, called "Navigating the Job Market in the Academy and Beyond."

In the Community

Sarah Duggan, Decorative Arts of the Gulf South research curator and coordinator, recently served on the review committee for the National Society of Colonial Dames of America's Great American Treasures grants.

Alfred E. Lemmon served on the partnership committee for France in the Americas, a collaborative bilingual digital library project of the French National Library.

Collections Processor **Catie Sampson** was elected a committee member of the Society of American Archivists' Archival History Section Steering Committee for 2021–22.

Programming Coordinator **Amy Dailey Williams** was elected to sit on the review panel for the Louisiana Project Grants program administered and funded by the Louisiana Division of the Arts. The program is intended to cultivate innovative arts projects that have a lasting impact in each region of the state.

IN MEMORIAM

Daphne L. Derven

The Historic New Orleans Collection celebrates the memory of Daphne L. Derven, paradigm-changing curator of education from 2013 to 2018, who passed away in October 2021 following an extended illness.

“During her tenure, Daphne reimagined educational outreach at The Collection,” said Daniel Hammer, president and CEO. “She inspired her colleagues to dream big and inspired countless students with her enthusiasm and creativity.”

“Daphne was unapologetically bold and absolutely committed to her work,” said Jenny Schwartzberg, Derven’s longtime collaborator at THNOC and her successor as education curator. “She was a constant champion for educational access, and the paid internship program she established—renamed the Derven Scholars Program in her honor—has opened doors, both physical and virtual, to students across the region and country.” Indeed, Derven’s commitment to paid internships as a means of expanding access has become a cornerstone of THNOC’s institutional planning for the future.

Derven brought to The Collection a global network of contacts and a vision grounded in humanism. Trained as an archaeologist, she was also an internationally respected food historian, and her 2010 presentation (“We Like It Spicy”) at THNOC’s inaugural culinary symposium—now known as the Food Forum—introduced local audiences to her expertise and dry wit.

Her expansive vision was informed by stints at some of the nation’s most innovative and impactful museums and nonprofits: Historic Deerfield, in Massachusetts; the California Academy of Sciences, in San Francisco; Copia: The American Center for Wine, Food, and the Arts, in Napa Valley; and the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, in New York. An opportunity to serve as special projects manager for the Emeril Lagasse Foundation drew Derven to New Orleans; later, the chance to join THNOC and reshape its educational mission was, in the words of her brother, John, “absolutely her favorite job.”

When she first arrived at THNOC, Derven was a department of one—and even after her core team grew, her ambitious agenda inspired broad-based support. Curators, catalogers, reading room and visitor services staff, editors, and others flocked to her side, eager to help develop resources for students and teachers. “I liked that she could be firm and calm at the same time,” said Reference Associate Robert Ticknor, who worked side-by-side with Derven on award-winning collaborations with Bard Early College New Orleans and Xavier University of Louisiana. “She was a ‘say yes’ rather than a ‘say no’ person.”

Derven’s can-do nature and charisma inspired colleagues outside the office as well as inside the classroom. “When I think of Daphne, I think of travel, adventure, food—and how generous she was with her knowledge and experience,” said Network Administrator Lisa Griffin. “When I was planning a trip, she would let me borrow from her amazing cookbook collection, recommend music, places to go and things to do. She once told me to never pass up the opportunity to enjoy a meal with locals—even if you don’t speak each other’s languages, you’ll figure it out. I’ve had some wonderful meals with complete strangers based on that bit of advice.”

Schwartzberg concurs: “Daphne loved sharing stories about her travels and archaeological work, and I never got tired of listening to them. When Daphne left The Collection she gave me a Zuni bear fetish, which symbolizes strength and courage. I’ve kept it on my desk ever since—I look at it daily and think of Daphne. Her influence lives on throughout New Orleans—in restaurants, bars, museum galleries, and dozens more places—and will not soon be forgotten.” —JESSICA DORMAN



Photograph by Christian Banfield

In Daphne’s memory, THNOC welcomes tribute gifts in support of the Derven Scholars Program, a paid internship program for high school, college, and graduate students interested in historical research. For more information, please call the Office of Development at (504) 598-7109.



FOCUS ON PHILANTHROPY

Mimi and Claude Schlesinger

“Philanthropy was an important part of my upbringing,” said Mimi Schlesinger, going into a fond recollection from her family history. “I had a great-uncle who was a sugar chemist; he worked on a sugar plantation. He got sick and went to the hospital, but they couldn’t do an X-ray because they didn’t have the proper equipment. He died of pneumonia. My grandmother and her brother, siblings of my great-uncle, bought the hospital an X-ray machine so that others would not suffer the loss they had endured.”

Mimi and Claude Schlesinger have been members of The Historic New Orleans Collection since 2016, and they’ve steadily increased their annual giving to become Bienville Circle members, in 2020. Mimi said she’s been motivated by that family story her entire life, no more so than during these difficult times, and as her grandmother often said: “The community’s been good me—I want to be good to the community.”

“Philanthropy formed a special part of Mimi’s heritage,” Claude added.

The Schlesingers met in the 1970s at an unlikely venue—a criminal justice course offered at Loyola University—and married in 1983. Claude was well into his 20-year career with the New Orleans Police Department, and although Mimi was interested in law enforcement she

became a lawyer instead, as did Claude, shortly before he retired from the NOPD as a lieutenant and commander of homicide. She specialized in Social Security Disability law, and Claude is now a partner in the New Orleans firm Guste, Barnett, Schlesinger, and Alpaugh, LLP.

Claude’s parents were German immigrants who settled in New Orleans in 1939—his father started a construction company after the war—and Mimi grew up nearby in Baton Rouge, with family in the New Orleans and St. Gabriel areas. Mimi’s love of local history started early. “I was always fascinated by Louisiana history,” she said, describing a third-grade trip to New Orleans that opened her eyes to the distinctive culture and beauty of the city. She went on to enjoy many history classes during her undergraduate years at Louisiana State University, focusing on the southern United States.

Claude had his own exposure to New Orleans history and culture in the line of duty, though his experience, by necessity, skewed more toward the city’s long-storied relationship with crime. He worked in patrol, sex crimes, and child abuse, and played a significant role in developing the department’s computer capability. One notable assignment was patrolling Bourbon Street as the promenade

commander. “You walk up and down Bourbon Street for eight hours, being visible,” he said. “It’s different now.”

Over the years he watched the entertainment destination turn from a glitzy, higher-end nightclub to more of an informal, anything-goes party zone. “You see more T-shirts and shorts now—and more late-night crime,” he said.

Over the years, the Schlesingers have attended a number of THNOC events and programs, but they’re particularly partial to the annual study tours. The Schlesingers accompanied THNOC on trips to Paris and the Netherlands, where the fields of tulips in bloom took Mimi’s breath away. Dutch representatives also talked to the group about the country’s renowned water-management system. “We have that issue here as well,” said Mimi, who also went with THNOC to Vienna and Budapest.

One favorite memory for Claude was visiting a private country house owned by the current Baron de Pontalba, a descendant of the famous New Orleans Pontalbas. “It was fascinating,” Claude said. “His home is full of all their family artwork and treasures, many relating to New Orleans.”

That special access to off-the-beaten-path sites is what makes the study tours so “educational and fun,” Mimi said. “The Collection has enough contacts that we get into very special places, private places, that you otherwise wouldn’t see.”

“The other guests on the study trips add so much to the whole experience,” Claude said.

The Schlesingers made an especially important contribution to The Collection’s new museum facility at 520 Royal Street by sponsoring a room in the History of the French Quarter Galleries. They understand that philanthropy is legacy, and for decades to come the Mimi Moyses Schlesinger and Claude Schlesinger Gallery will stand as testament to that commitment.

“The more we’ve learned about THNOC, the more we have come to respect The Collection and the staff,” Claude said. “We really appreciate what you are doing to promote the history and culture of the region.” —MOLLY REID CLEAVER

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July–September 2021

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Donations are used to purchase books that will be marked with a commemorative bookplate.

E. Alexandra Stafford in memory of Carol Layton Parsons—*A Unique Slant of Light: The Bicentennial History of Art in Louisiana*, Michael Sartisky, editor in chief; J. Richard Gruber, senior editor; John R. Kemp, associate editor (New Orleans: Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities, 2012), 2012.0362

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Members of Mariachi Jalisco view the installation *Over and Over the Waves*.

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ON THE SCENE

Fine Prospects



Early November saw the opening of **Prospect.5**, the latest edition of the citywide art triennial Prospect New Orleans. THNOC is a host site for three different installations on view through January 23.

- A. Mariachi Jalisco performs in the 533 Royal Street courtyard to celebrate the opening of the Prospect.5 installation *Over and Over the Waves*, which explores the 8th Cavalry Mexican Military Band's influential visit to New Orleans in 1884.
- B. Prospect.5 Curatorial Associate Lucia Momoh, Prospect.5 artist Anastasia Pelias, and Prospect.5 Co-artistic Director Naima J. Keith
- C. David Robinson-Morris and Prospect.5 artist Ron Bechet
- D. Vitus Shell, Paul Stephen Benjamin, and L. Kasimu Harris
- E. Prospect.5 Co-artistic Director Naima J. Keith, Prospect.5 Associate Curator Grace Deveney, Prospect.5 artist Dawoud Bey, and THNOC President and CEO Daniel Hammer
- F. THNOC President and CEO Daniel Hammer, Belkis DiCianni, Robert DiCianni, Prospect New Orleans Executive Director Nick Stillman, and Heidi Kiesling



Members of the **Cailot Circle** enjoyed a champagne brunch at the Hotel Monteleone, followed by a rooftop tour of the city's skyline exploring the history of New Orleans and the Mississippi River.

- G. Alyssa and Matt Escalante
- H. Kim Loubat and Christopher Shepperson



The **2021–22 Food Forum** kicked off in November with the first of four installments, each celebrating the culinary seasons of South Louisiana.

- I. Manager of Public Programs and Interpretive Services Amanda McFillen, Michael Leathem, and Karen Leathem
- J. Katherine Valentine and Paige Lilley Schulte

Related Holdings



Dauphine Burlesk poster
ca. 1970
by Johnson Studios, designer
gift of Boyd Cruise, 1979.176.1



Desiree Alliance conference catalog
2016
by the Desiree Alliance, distributor
gift of Pamela D. Arceneaux, 2016.0275.1



New Mahogany Hall pamphlet
1898 or 1899
by Lulu White, sponsor
56-15



Naughty New Orleans poster
1954
by Rebel Pictures, distributor
2011.0300.50

ACQUISITION SPOTLIGHT

There Was a House in New Orleans

Fundamentals of Massage

2020.0299

Bourbon Street became a world-renowned entertainment destination during the Second World War, when jazz clubs and variety shows showcased novelty acts, comedians, and, most of all, the glitz and glamour of burlesque dancers. During Bourbon Street’s golden age, which lasted into the 1960s, more than 50 burlesque clubs lined or sat near the thoroughfare.

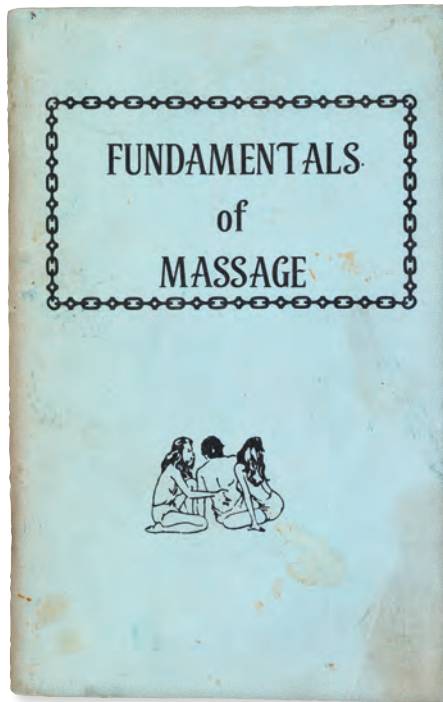
Of course, there was a seedier side to the place’s pizzazz. Many clubs were run by mobsters who encouraged their female employees to participate in illegal acts such as B-drinking (soliciting overpriced drinks from patrons for a share of the profit) and prostitution. Starting in 1962, New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison,

newly elected and eager to make his mark, cracked down on the illegal activities of Bourbon Street clubs, making them far less profitable. As burlesque clubs started to close in the latter half of the 1960s, sex didn’t stop selling but rather took different forms. Go-go dancers became a draw for bars. Strip clubs as we know them today, with canned music and lap dances, started to open. Theaters in the area, such as the Dauphine and the Elysian, became houses for adult movies. And for visitors wanting a more interactive experience, massage parlors opened.

By 1976, there were many massage parlors in the district, three of which—House of the Rising Sun, at 516 ½ Bourbon; House of Paradise, at 123 Royal Street; and House of Joy, at 425 Bourbon—were operated by Sallie Oster, who also ran Sallie’s School of Massage, located at the House of Joy.

The new business model was not without legal problems: in 1976 the city enacted an ordinance that prohibited commercial massages given to persons of the opposite sex. Oster and another massage parlor operator, Julia Conrad, successfully had the ordinance nullified, claiming it violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on the grounds that it discriminated against female massage therapists.

In 1982, Oster was arrested for operating Sallie’s School of Massage without a license and for issuing false diplomas. At that time, massage therapists earned certificates after completing 200 hours of instruction, whereas Sallie’s reportedly offered diplomas for \$250 and as little as 15 minutes of instruction. Five of the six massage parlors operating in Jefferson Parish in 1982 were found to employ therapists with



RECENT ADDITIONS

Staring Down Death and Letting Love In

Francisco de Sentmanat y Zayas farewell letter

2020.0299

Francisco de Sentmanat y Zayas (1802–1844), came from a comfortable family in Cuba—part of Spain’s military aristocracy—that had ties to Saint-Domingue and New Orleans. As a young man he was taken with the revolutionary fervor sweeping Latin America at the time; forced to flee Cuba, he settled in New Orleans. In 1831 he married one of Bernard de Marigny’s daughters, Rose, and established himself in local business affairs, eventually becoming an importer of Spanish wine and a café owner.

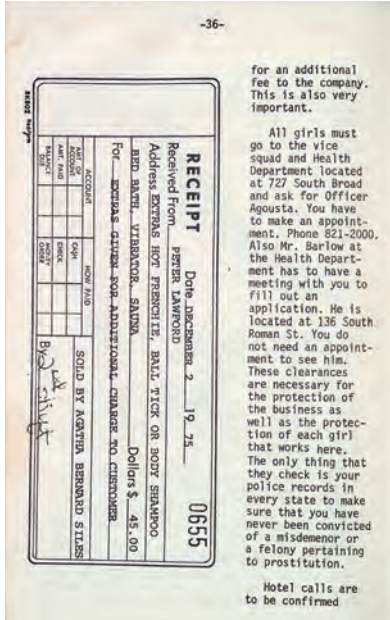
Sentmanat had many business contacts in Mexico, and he became an ardent opponent of centralized authoritarian rule in that nation, to the point of leading Mexicans and foreign volunteers in successful military actions against centralist forces. In so doing he joined the ranks of *flibustiers*, or freebooters, unauthorized captains who sailed to Mexico from New Orleans and other ports, bringing guns and mercenaries to aid one side or the other. In May 1842 president Antonio López de Santa Anna named him governor of the state of Tabasco. During what turned out to be a brief term in this office (until July 1843), he established a high school, several hospitals, and public street lighting in the

capital, and he issued decrees to protect the poor from false imprisonment.

Denouncing unchecked smuggling and other forms of public corruption in Mexico, Sentmanat made a bitter enemy of one Commodore Reybaud, an official of the port of Tampico, who, upon losing his post, publicly called Sentmanat a coward. When the two found themselves together in New Orleans in April 1844, Sentmanat severely wounded Reybaud in a duel. In winning the duel, though, Sentmanat had made a fatal error: Reybaud was a close friend of Santa Anna’s, and when Sentmanat attempted to return to Mexico the next month, he was betrayed and captured by Santa Anna’s ally, General Pedro de Ampudia. In June 1844 Ampudia had him executed. His head and heart were boiled in oil, then both were displayed on a pike.

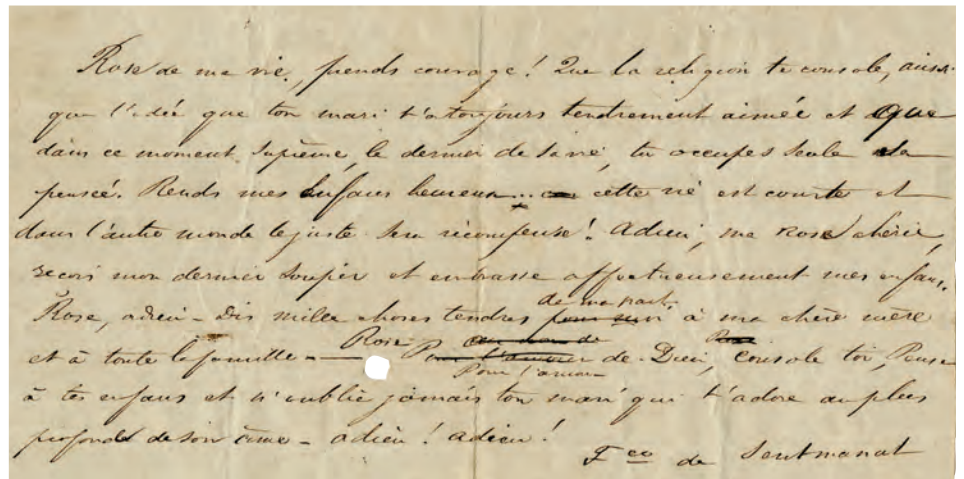
On the eve of his execution, Sentmanat wrote this touching farewell to his wife, Rose (translated from the French here):

Rose of my life, be brave! Be consoled by religion, as well as by the idea that your husband has always loved you tenderly and that in this supreme moment, the last of his life, you alone occupy his thoughts. Make my children happy . . . this life is short and in the next world the just shall be rewarded! Adieu, my dear Rose, receive my last sigh and affectionately kiss my children. Rose,



false diplomas from Sallie’s and had to quickly apply to the Louisiana Board of Health in order to remain open.

THNOC recently acquired *Fundamentals of Massage*, a handbook and manual issued to employees of the House of Joy. More than half of the manual is devoted to anatomy and physiology and the corresponding benefits of various massage techniques, such as petrissage (kneading the body) and effleurage (stroking the body with circular motions). The rest of the manual is devoted to house rules and guidelines for each area of the business, including laundry, cleaning mixtures, the front desk, and the “movie room.” It also includes personal rules and helpful tips for employees, such as a rule against narcotics—“Everyone will be brought to jail”—and selling techniques. “Try to sell him as fast as you can and try to answer as few amount of questions as possible,” the manual states. “The less you say the better off it will be.” —NINA BOZAK



ACQUISITIONS

adieu—say a thousand tender things to my dear mother for me, and to all the family. Rose of God, be consoled, think of your children and never forget your husband who adores you from the greatest depths of his soul—Adieu! Adieu!

—HOWARD MARGOT

Gifford counterculture ephemera

gift of Daniel W. Gifford, 2021.0178;
2021.0179

As a teenager living in the French Quarter during the late 1960s and early '70s, Dan Gifford amassed a large collection of advertisements and posters for local events, head shops, music venues, and bars. Gifford was a student at Francis T. Nicholls High School on St. Claude Avenue (now Frederick A. Douglass High School), and there he sold copies of underground newspapers such as *Balls*, *the Ungarbled Word* and *In Arcane Logos*, which he picked up directly from their respective offices in and around the Quarter. Gifford was also a graphic artist at the time, and his work appears in advertisements for local head shops like Mecca (729 Bourbon Street) and the Shop (505 Dumaine Street) that were placed in these newspapers.

Gifford's collected posters and little-known periodicals provide a rich glimpse of 1960s and '70s counterculture in New Orleans. One of those publications was *NOLA Express*, founded in 1967 by the poets Darlene Fife and Robert Head.



The title was inspired by William S. Burroughs's experimental, psychedelic sci-fi novel *Nova Express* (1964), and the magazine's contributors were similarly avant-garde figures in their respective fields: the poet-provocateur Charles Bukowski had a syndicated column, "Notes of a Dirty Old Man," and illustrations came from the performance poet Hedwig Gorski, artist Francisco McBride, and many others.

A silk-screen announcement from the collection shows New Orleans's brush with the "love-in" trend of the late 1960s. Held June 23, 1969, at Mardi Gras Fountain on the lakefront, the love-in promised to "help New Orleans" with free music and

(to use modern parlance) chill vibes. It wasn't a homegrown happening: according to a *States-Item* article covering the event, it was organized by a "bearded, barefoot, and bare-chested" Los Angeles hippie named Jim Vance, who had been in New Orleans for only a month. After successfully pulling off the love-in, which attracted a peaceful crowd of about 400 college-aged people, Vance skipped town, fearing arrest on trumped-up drug charges.

Also included in the Gifford collection are posters for rock shows at the Bank (941 Decatur Street), a poster for WJMR-FM 97.1 by Probe Arts, a striking advertisement for Cosimo's Bar (1201 Burgundy

Street), and a poster for a Jefferson Airplane concert at the St. Bernard Civic Auditorium. —NINA BOZAK and MOLLY REID CLEAVER

Andrée Loisel Collection

gift of an anonymous donor, 2021.0199

Andrée Loisel (1964–1992) was a New Orleans–born artist and musician who contracted HIV while attending college in New York. She was first diagnosed in 1988 and died of AIDS just four years later, at the age of 27. In the intervening years, after moving back to New Orleans, she became an active part of the local movement to support people living with HIV/AIDS. She was a vocal proponent of safe sex, appearing on television and giving public talks to warn young men and women of the danger presented by HIV/AIDS, which, at the time, was still little understood by the medical community and even less by the public at large.

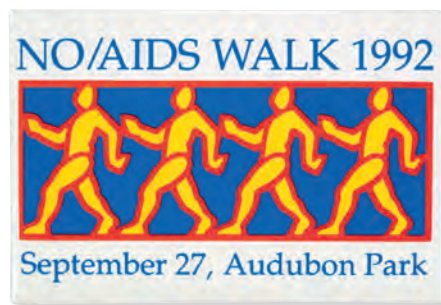
When Loisel was first diagnosed, the US was only just beginning to take serious action to address the AIDS epidemic, despite years of urgent efforts among LGBT activists. It wasn't until late 1989



that Congress formed the National Commission on AIDS. The same year, the US Health Resources and Services Commission made the first substantial allocation of federal dollars to help states provide treatment for the disease. In such a climate, it was exceedingly rare for HIV patients to discuss their diagnosis publicly. Loisel made the decision to not only fight the disease but also help prevent others from getting it by speaking out. “At first, she was angry, but Andrée came to understand that being angry wasn't enough,” wrote *Times-Picayune* columnist Sheila Stroup in 1994, covering an event held in Loisel's memory. “Even when she was afraid, she'd do it anyway,” her mother, Delores Loisel, was quoted as saying in the same article.

The Collection recently acquired a small collection of materials related to Loisel's AIDS activism. Included is a poster for a charity walk hosted by the NO/AIDS Task Force in 1992, which Loisel and her mother participated in shortly before her death. Loisel also served as a board member of the New Orleans People with AIDS Coalition (NOPWAC), a group that first incorporated in 1990 and appears to only have been active through the mid-1990s. The newly accessioned collection features seven buttons related to HIV/AIDS activism, including one representing NOPWAC.

THNOC acquired the collection from Victor Loisel, who kindly supplied information about the work of his mother and sister and their fight to support those living with HIV/AIDS. —AIMEE EVERRETT and MOLLY REID CLEAVER



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The Historic New Orleans Collection is a nonprofit institution dedicated to the stewardship of the history and culture of New Orleans and the Gulf South. Founded in 1966 through the Kemper and Leila Williams Foundation, The Collection operates as a museum, research center, and publisher in the heart of the French Quarter.



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