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# Voodoo Fest 2012 art, preview of massive mechanical face and other attractions



By **Doug MacCash, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune**

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The **Voodoo Festival 2012** art display seems somewhat slighter than some past years, based on a preview of photographs and plans provided by Voodoo designer **Stefan Beese**. But the 30-ft mechanized metal face by New Mexico artist Christian Ristow promises to be a crowd pleaser. Ristow built the aluminum robot, titled "Face Forward" for the annual **Burning Man sculpture Festival** in Nevada in 2011. In an online video Ristow said that he'd considered sculpting the face from a solid material, but practical considerations led him to model the visage from a network of overlapping aluminum strips.



Voodoo Festival 2012 Art, preview of massive mechanical face and other sculpture The Voodoo Festival 2012 art display seems somewhat slighter than some past years, based on a preview of photographs and plans provided by Voodoo designer Stefan Beese. But the 30-ft mechanized metal face by New Mexico artist Christian Ristow promises to be a crowd pleaser.

*Voodoo Festival*

It was a great design decision. In photos, the authentic yet sketchy silver face melts into the landscape and sky like a surrealist Salvador Dali painting in three dimensions. The robotic sculpture is controlled by twelve joy sticks that allow audience members to cause the Gulliver-scale eyes to blink, the brows to lift and the lips to curl convincingly. Ristow's bicycle-activated steel bird was a highlight of last year's fest, but "Face Forward" seems considerably more captivating.

Can't wait to see it.

Watch **a wonderful YouTube video by Wendy Shuey of Ristow and "Face Forward"** here.

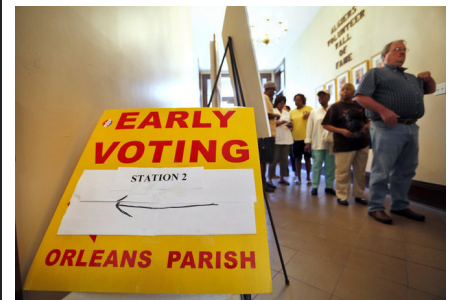
Christina Sporrang, who contributed the huge fiery trapeze bird sculpture in 2011, is back again, with a towering steel crustacean sprouting a pair of long antennae that terminate in jets of actual fire. According to the Voodoo website, when the 30-ft. sculpture was first displayed, it was popularly referred to as the "Lobster Icon," but for New Orleans purposes I hereby dub it the "Monster Metal Mud Bug."



Beese said that Voodoo Fest



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VoodooFest 2011 art and experimental architecture installations  
 Voodoo Fest 2011 is a playground of art and experimental architecture installations. In this opening day video tour, you'll see the following works in this order. Heron by Christina Sporrang with the New Orleans Mystic Ponies aerial group, Tornado by Jamin Murphy, Pinwheel Garden by Delaney McGuinness and Johnston Burkhardt, Fledgling by Christian Ristow, Live Mural Wall by Chris Berends and others, Sparkle TouT Taux by James Michalopoulos, Fish by Jamin Murphy and Fountain De Lis by Richie Jordan and Plan B. Read other stories about the art/architecture installations at NOLA.com. Follow Doug MacCash on Twitter at dougmaccashTP.

Watch video

beneath the bar tent. The chandelier is a tribute to Voodoo fest concierge Mike Theis, who died earlier this year.



Enlarge *Doug MacCash, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune*

'Face Forward' at night by Christian Ristow

VoodooFest 2012 Art Preview gallery (7 photos)



will be cancelled. The Besthoff Sculpture Garden will also be open during regular hours. A museum representative was unsure if parking along Lelong Drive, the avenue leading to the museum, will be available.

Beese said that the new narrower entrance to the festival behind NOMA will be the site of an array of several new artworks. A team of Tulane University architecture students led by Andrew Graham has produced a 20-ft. tall gateway in the form of a geometric jumble of lettering that spells Voodoo from the front and Exit from the rear. New Orleans sound artist Marcus Brown has created an interactive electronic walkway that reacts to the footsteps of visitors to produce words and sounds. Dave Rhodes, who produced the gigantic paper [airplane sculpture dedicated to the aviation pioneer John Moisant in 2010](#), is creating a set of symbolic structures made from Crescent City architectural remnants to mark the crowd's passage into the festival.

Watch [a video of Rhodes' airplane sculpture](#).

fans will find a few favorites from years past, including the huge lighted cone by German designers Manuel Kretzer and Hans Sachs, the grove of tall pole-mounted pinwheels by Delaney McGuinness and Johnson Burkhardt and neon displays by New Orleans neon artist, Jerry Therio. He announced that the high carnival Ferris wheel will be relocated to allow for better vistas of the park and he looks forward to an enhanced outdoor laser light show ricocheting off of the main stage. Bees suggested that visitors to the v.i.p. area look for the chandelier made of hats

Beese pointed out that the footprint of the festival is somewhat different this year. The entrance to the annual [City Park](#) extravaganza has been moved to the concrete bridge behind The New Orleans Museum of Art. The giant steel Voodoo sign that last year rested in the meadow beside the museum will be moved to a field closer to the main stage where Beese predicts it will serve as a focus for photo ops.

NOMA will remain open during Voodoo Fest this year, though the usual Friday evening hours

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Rhodes, who created a [plywood version of Stonehenge on St. Claude Avenue](#) to celebrate the summer solstice, has partnered with fellow artists Bruke Rafter and Josh Pitts to produce a wide doorway meant to funnel festival goers during the final steps onto the festival grounds. The title of the red and white wooden structure is "Doorway of Perception," which, Rhodes explained, was inspired by visionary author Aldous Huxley. "There are things that are known," Rhodes quoted, "and things that are unknown, and in between are the doors of perception." Rhodes said he hopes Voodoo visitors will "enter with an open mind and have a good time."

Read the story and watch the video: "[Experimental architect Stefan Beese converts a steel refuse container into a backyard pool](#)" here. Redefining dumpster diving.

Read the story and watch the video: "[Two-story king cake baby sculpture to blaze at Burning Man](#)".

Read my related story "[John Moisant, aviation pioneer, died a century ago in New Orleans](#)". I love this odd piece of New Orleans history.

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**trent reker**


last year was my first voodoo fest. everything about it (except prices for food and beer - as if i am the only one) rocked. people come far and wide to experience the, um, experience. as i jumped and yelled i even had a convo as a spectator with the band morphine between songs. soundgarden was amazing. locals who complain are lame. voodoo is the best set of musical acts in the usa.

too bad they chose metallica, but in that day, there is so much more to see and hear.

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