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Louisiana State Museum marks a Mardi Gras milestone with *From Tramps to Kings: 100 Years of Zulu*

NEW ORLEANS – The Louisiana State Museum and the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club present *From Tramps to Kings: Zulu 100 Years*, a yearlong exhibit exploring the origins, unique Carnival traditions, and cultural and civic contributions of Zulu from 1909 to the present.

From Tramps to Kings features more than 100 seldom-seen treasures loaned by Zulu members, as well as artifacts from the Museum, the Historic New Orleans Collection, Tulane University, and other sources.

The exhibit opened in January and will run through December 31, 2009 at the Presbytere, New Orleans.

“We’re delighted to work with the Zulu organization to share their century-old traditions of fun and fantasy,” said Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu, whose office directs Louisiana’s Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. “This exhibit is a Mardi Gras season ‘must-see’ for visitors and locals alike.”

Highlights of the show include a ballroom tableau of 14 former Zulu Kings and Queens in bejeweled costumes and elaborate headdresses, and all seven of Zulu’s comic parade characters including the Big Shot of Africa, the Witch Doctor, and the Ambassador. The origins and development of these trademark figures are explored in photographs and personal memorabilia.

Also featured are rare sound recordings and a personal letter by Louis Armstrong describing his historic reign as Zulu King in 1949. “We really did pitch a boogie woogie,” Armstrong wrote of his experience to a New Orleans newspaper reporter in 1952.

But *Tramps to Kings* is not all-exuberant fun. The exhibit presents Zulu’s history in parallel with the wider struggle by the city’s African-Americans against discrimination. A turning point came in 1969 when Zulu won permission from the city of New Orleans to parade on Canal Street, formerly reserved for white krewes.

“Zulu is more than a revelry and comic characters. It has a special place in New Orleans’ history and the African-American experience,” said Ike Campbell, Chairman of Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club.

A yearlong program of family-oriented special events and a monthly lecture series enhances the museum experience. Zulu members will share traditions like coconut decorating.

Visitors can also see the exhibit online and get updated information on special events at www.trampstokings.com.

The exhibit is presented with the Office of the Lieutenant Governor; the Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism; the Louisiana State Museum Foundation; the Friends of the Cabildo, and the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities.

Tickets are \$6.00 for adults, and \$5.00 for seniors and active military personnel and include admission to the Museum’s comprehensive permanent exhibit, *Mardi Gras in Louisiana*. Children under 12 are free.

The Presbytere is located on Jackson Square, in the heart of the French Quarter.

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The Louisiana State Museum, a complex of national landmarks housing thousands of artifacts and works of art reflecting Louisiana’s legacy of historic events and cultural diversity, is part of the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, which is overseen by Lt. Governor Mitch Landrieu. The Museum network includes five properties in New Orleans’ French Quarter: the Cabildo, Presbytere, 1850 House, Old U.S. Mint and Madame John’s Legacy. Other sites include museums in Baton Rouge, Natchitoches, Patterson and Thibodaux.

For more information about the Louisiana State Museum please call 800.568.6968 or visit <http://lsm.crt.state.la.us>.