



REX 2022 SCHOOL OF DESIGN SESQUICENTENNIAL

SPECIAL SESQUICENTENNIAL FLOAT - Inspired by a similar float from 1892's *Symbolism of Colors* parade, this riderless float was designed and built to celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Rex Organization, incorporated as the School of Design. Hercules and Zeus support the Rex coat of arms composed of the Carnival colors of purple, gold and green. The regal scroll reads "Rex Proclaims Carnival, 1872, Pro Bono Publico."



1. REX, KING OF CARNIVAL, MONARCH OF MERRIMENT - Rex's float carries the King of Carnival and his Pages through the streets of New Orleans each Mardi Gras. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival, Rex's float was redesigned each year. The current King's float, one of Carnival's most iconic images, has been in use for over fifty years.



2. HIS MAJESTY'S BANDWAGON - From this traditional float, one of the Royal Bands provides lively music for Rex and for those who greet him on the parade route. One of those songs will surely be the Rex anthem: "If Ever I Cease to Love," which has been played in every Rex parade since 1872.



3. THE KING'S JESTERS - Even the Monarch of Merriment needs jesters in his court. Rex's jesters dress in the traditional colors of Mardi Gras – purple, green and gold. The papier mâché' figures on the Jester float are some of the oldest in the Rex parade and were sculpted by artists in Viareggio, Italy, a city with its own rich Carnival tradition.



4. THE BOEUF GRAS - The *Boeuf Gras* ("the fattened ox") represents one of the oldest traditions and images of Mardi Gras, symbolizing the great feast on the day before Lent begins. In the early years of the New Orleans Carnival a live Boeuf Gras, decorated with garlands, had an honored place near the front of the Rex Parade. The Boeuf Gras returned in 1959 as a stately papier mâché sculpture.



5. THE BUTTERFLY KING - Since the earliest days of Carnival, butterflies have been popular symbolic design elements, their brief and colorful life a metaphor for the ephemeral magic of Mardi Gras itself. The invitation to the 1882 Rex ball added butterfly wings to the King of Carnival, creating the enduring image of "The Butterfly King." The Butterfly King float, introduced in 2012, was the first new permanent float to join the Rex Procession in many decades.



6. TITLE FLOAT: "SCHOOL OF DESIGN SESQUICENTENNIAL" - Rex, the King of Carnival, first reigned in New Orleans on Mardi Gras day, 1872, and established traditions that have endured for 150 years, including Carnival's colors—purple, green and gold—and its anthem—"If Ever I Cease to Love." Rex founders chose the motto "Pro Bono Publico," and that commitment to service continues to guide the School of Design. The sesquicentennial Rex parade pays tribute to the artistic legacy of the past century and a half. Hail Rex!



7. **“IF EVER I CEASE TO LOVE”** - This was a popular song when the Rex Organization was founded in 1872. British singer Lydia Thompson helped popularize the song with its nonsense lyrics as she toured the country with her *Bluebeard* musical revue. She was performing in New Orleans when Rex first appeared, but, contrary to Carnival legend, she likely was not romantically involved with another visitor, Russia’s Grand Duke Alexis. The tune also provided the theme for the 1997 Rex parade.



8. **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE** - Streetcars are an important symbol of New Orleans, and this iconic float honors the best known of all New Orleans’ streetcar lines. This permanent float depicts “The Streetcar Named Desire,” made famous by the playwright Tennessee Williams. Self-powered, it is the only Rex float not pulled by a tractor.



9. **THE PURSUIT OF PLEASURE 1882** - Floats in the 1882 Rex parade, designed by Charles Briton, illustrated various happy human endeavors, including hunting, gambling, picnicking and “The Joys of Mardi Gras Morning.” A fanciful float titled “Piscatorial Pursuits,” celebrated the pleasures of fishing and inspired this float’s design.



10. **THE TRIUMPH OF AURELIEN 1886** - With the subtitle “Grand Historic Scenes,” this parade explored the rich history of the Roman Empire and focused on Aurelien, the great 3rd Century Roman General and Emperor. Float titles included “Octavian’s Triumph” and “Timur the Tartar.” Images of lions, important symbols of power to the Romans, are part of this float’s design and were incorporated in 1886 court jewelry.



11. **THE REALM OF FLOWERS 1888** - This theme allowed Rex artist Bror Wikstrom to fill float after float with glorious floral creations, an effort beautifully replicated on this float by the School of Design’s own Royal Artists. Original float titles included “Lily,” “Daisy,” and “The Faeries at Home,” a reference to a fairy garden as recreated on this float.



12. **SYMBOLISM OF COLORS 1892** - For this parade Mr. Wikstrom assigned symbolic meaning to a rainbow of colors, including the Carnival colors—purple (justice), green (faith) and gold (power). The 1892 parade included a riderless float with the Rex coat of arms which inspired a new permanent float of similar design built to honor Rex’s sesquicentennial.



13. **CHRONICLES OF FAIRYLAND 1895** - Fergus Hume, a New Zealander and a prolific writer, primarily of mystery novels, published a collection of fairy tales in 1892 titled *Chronicles of Faeryland-Fantastic Tales for Young and Old* on which the 1895 Rex parade was based. Dozens of fairy images appeared on floats with titles like “The Giant Dunderhead” and “Revelries of Titania’s Court.”



14. **HEAVENLY BODIES 1896** - Several times over the past century and a half the School of Design has turned to the night sky for inspiration for its parade design. Bror Wikstrom's sketches for the 1896 parade featured planets and constellations including "Hesperides," "Virgo," "Aquarius" and "Cygnus"—the swan constellation—which is depicted on this float.



15. **IN THE REALM OF IMAGINATION 1904** - Limited only by the imagination, this theme and parade offered infinite and rich possibilities. Float titles included "Vale of Stars," "Season of the Feathered Songsters," and "Bower of Pearls." This float incorporates figures from two designs from the 1904 parade—"Festival of the Fairies" and "Dance of the Demons."



16. **FREAKS OF FABLE 1910** - "The Dragon" was one of the memorable floats in the last Rex parade designed by Bror Wikstrom. Mr. Wikstrom completed sketches for this parade in 1909 and died before the 1910 Carnival. Other float titles included "The Midgard Serpent," "The Sea Horses," "The Ogre," "The Centaurs," "Cerberus" and "The Unicorn."



17. **ENCHANTMENTS AND TRANSFORMATIONS 1913** - Ceneilla Bower Alexander designed this parade which included floats titled "Arachne, the Spider" and "The Sleep of Endymion." This float, "Daphne and the Laurel Tree," depicts the transformation of the nymph Daphne into a laurel tree to help her escape the pursuit of the god Apollon.



18. **FRAGMENTS FROM SONG AND STORY 1915** - Drawing on stories and songs from history, literature, and mythology, this parade included float titles such as "The Passing of Arthur" and "Alladin and His Wonderful Lamp." This float, titled "Lalla Rookh," was inspired by an early 19th Century Thomas Moore poem about a Persian princess. The key figure depicts an elegant howdah, the canopied seat carried atop an elephant.



19. **ROMANCES OF RIVER AND VALLEY 1922** - With titles like "Marriage of the River and the Valley," "The Trapper's Song," "The Prairie Schooner," and "Searching for Gold," the 1922 parade celebrated discovery by land and river. This float is inspired by "The River's Birth," a 1922 float depicting the River God offering the rich bounties of the river.



20. **THE JEWELS OF REX 1930** - Louis Andrews Fischer drew on the rich imagery of jewels of many kingdoms to design the 1930 Rex parade. The Egyptian theme of this float is inspired by her sketch for "Lapis Lazuli from Luxor." Other floats illustrated "The Peacock Throne of Shah Jehan," "The Emerald Goddess of Peru" and "The Fatal Ruby of Russia."



21. REALMS OF EARTH, SEA AND AIR 1938 - This parade, designed by Leda Hincks Plauché, included floats titled “Realm of Lightning,” “Realm of Flight,” “Realm of Fire,” “Realm of Deception,” “Realm of Pearls,” and the “Realm of Lost Treasures.” The sea monster and other elements of this float were inspired by the design of the original “Realm of Undersea Life” float.



22. ARS POETICA 1981 - The 1981 parade celebrated poets through the ages. Designs illustrated ancient poems like “The Iliad” and classics like “Charge of the Light Brigade” and “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” This float honors the great poet and painter William Blake. The figure is from his painting titled “Ancient of Days.”



23. NATURE'S ROYALTY 1985 - Clever matching of birds and beasts with regal titles resulted in floats titled “Emperor Penguin,” “King Cobra,” “Kingfisher,” “Imperial Dragon,” “Queen Bee,” “Crowned Crane” and “Monarch Butterfly.” Monarch butterflies abound on this tribute to the 1985 Rex parade. This was one of the early parades designed by still-serving Rex Artistic Director, Henri Schindler.



24. THE WINGED WORLD 2004 - Winged figures abound in the myths, legends, and pantheons of ancient civilizations—from the Greeks and Romans to the Assyrians and Japanese. The 2004 Rex parade was filled with these beautiful, powerful, and sometimes terrifying winged wonders, including the colorful peacock as the centerpiece of this float.



25. VISIONS OF AGE-OLD CATHAY 2005 - Recorded Chinese history extends back more than five thousand years, a rich sweep of dynasties, warring states, contesting religions, and wonderful art. The 2005 Rex parade explored the historic and artistic legacy of those centuries and included a float depicting “The Pavilion of Heavenly Fragrance.”



26. THIS SCEPTRED ISLE 2011 - “This royal throne of Kings, this sceptred isle... this England.” These proud and patriotic words, from Shakespeare’s play, *Richard II*, describe the Island Kingdom comprising England, Scotland, and Wales. The British Isles’ rich history, mythology, and culture inspired the 2011 Rex parade, including a float bearing the imposing figure of King Henry VIII.



27. ARTISTS OF THE SCHOOL OF DESIGN - The unique art form of designing and creating the rolling tableaux of the Rex parade has been enriched by a long line of remarkable artists. Charles Briton, Bror Wikstrom and Ceneilla Bower Alexander designed Rex parades during Carnival’s pre-WWI “Golden Age.” George Soulié and his family firm faced the challenging task of converting their sketches into rolling works of art.



28. THE ROYAL BARGE - Reminiscent of a grand Viking ship, and complete with Royal Gryphon, the Royal Barge is one of Rex’s iconic permanent floats. This float is the last remnant of the Royal Navy, once a feature of each Rex Parade.