



Rex, The King of Carnival, Proclaims Mardi Gras 2026 and Unveils 2026 Proclamation

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*The Rex Organization, Incorporated in 1872 as the School of Design,
Continues its Legacy of Public Artwork Celebrating Carnival*

(New Orleans, Louisiana) Today, during the traditional Kings' Day celebration at Mardi Gras World, Rex, the King of Carnival, by royal edict, proclaimed Mardi Gras 2026. Rex Official James J. Reiss III announced the King of Carnival's proclamation and plans to visit "... his beloved Capital City of New Orleans" as follows:

Rex, King of the Carnival, sends greetings and announces with pleasure his intention to visit his Capital City of New Orleans.

His Majesty invites all of his subjects to gather, from far and near, to join in the many Celebrations and Processions which will shortly unfold under the Joyful Carnival Banner. He promises that the Festivities and Pageants arranged for this Celebration will surpass in Joyousness and exceed in Beauty the most Brilliant Attainments of the Glorious Past, culminating in His Grand Procession on Tuesday, February 17th, 2026 to celebrate the great festival of Mardi Gras.

It is further commanded and ordained: that the Joyous Music of Carnival shall fill the Streets of His Capital City, Multiplying all Merriment; that Fair Weather and Blue Skies shall prevail; that Multitudes might gather and celebrate without Impediment; that the Royal Constabulary shall marshal the Grand Celebration with their Customary Skill and Tolerance; and that the Keepers of Inns, Taverns, and Eating Establishments in His beloved Capital City shall throw open their Doors to receive all Carnival Celebrants.

By the King Himself, Rex

Attest Bathurst Lord High Chamberlin



Rex's Royal Edict Proclaiming Mardi Gras 2026

“Since its founding 154 years ago, the Rex Organization’s incorporated name has been ‘The School of Design,’ which reflects its interest in advancing education and the arts,” said Rex Official James J. Reiss III. Reiss continued, “Annually, the Rex Parade artistically and traditionally illustrates an educational theme rich in references to culture, history, mythology, literature, nature, geography, and the arts. The Rex 2026 Parade theme, ‘Rebirth and Renewal,’ carries that long and important tradition forward.”

Every culture since neolithic prehistory has told stories of rebirth, renewal, and resurrection – from the great flood myths of almost all known civilizations to the narrative of Christian resurrection central to our own Carnival traditions. The 2026 Rex procession features a beautiful array of symbolically and artistically rich examples of revival stories and legends. From India to the Inuit and from deities to the day-to-day, these artistically striking examples illustrate not only cross-cultural differences, but also the universality of mankind’s hopes for renewal and focus on the eternal.



Poster depicting Rex's 2026 Parade theme, "Rebirth and Renewal," by Matt Hales

In 1872, the Rex Organization set out to create a special daytime Carnival celebration for the city of New Orleans. It did so by creating magnificent floats, rolling works of art for the public to enjoy. At a time before internet, television, and radio, Rex's floats created a spectacle that quickly gained notice across the entire country. Visitors flocked to New Orleans to see the beautiful Carnival procession.

While Rex's rolling works of art are well-known in the New Orleans area and far beyond, other forms of art have also flourished. Historically, Rex has issued proclamations declaring the date of the Carnival celebration and inviting his subjects to gather and join in the festivities. Proclamations were posted in train depots around the country, and Mardi Gras in

New Orleans became a major tourist destination (see Rex's Royal Edict on Page 2). These proclamations were not issued after WWII.

In 1980, the tradition was revived, and each year a local artist selected by the Rex Organization creates an original Rex proclamation art print highlighting the year's theme or one of the iconic images of Rex and Carnival. These sought-after collectors' items always carry the notation "Rex Proclaims Mardi Gras."

The Rex 2026 Proclamation is an original painting by New Orleans artist Saskia Ozols. She is the daughter of the late Auseklis Ozols, who was a renowned portraitist, landscape painter, and founder of the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts who painted several beloved Rex proclamations in years past. Saskia is a practicing artist and independent curator with a 30-year exhibition record that includes regional, national, and international venues. She is the founder of the Fine Arts Preservation Society of New Orleans. Saskia has a Master of Fine Arts in painting and specializes in practicing and teaching historical painting techniques. She has taught at schools including Boston University, Tulane University, and Loyola University.

The 2026 Rex theme of "Rebirth and Renewal" provided an artistic point of departure for both symbolic and technical inspiration. Celebrating our city as an ever-evolving work of art in itself, the honor and challenge of creating this image required research, time, and collaboration. The artist, Saskia Ozols, utilized oil painting and drawing techniques of the 14th through 19th centuries, specifically the Flemish Vanitas paintings of the 17th century, which were images for meditation on life, mortality, vanity, the intellect, and transformation. The combination of specific flowers were grown in private New Orleans gardens and refer to the Victorian "Language of Flowers" in their meaning and symbolism. The painting itself contains layers of drawing, passages of *alla prima* painting, transparent veils of color, and handmade paints made with pure pigments. Each object in the proclamation painting is a piece of history in and of itself, with rich symbolism steeped in meaning to the Rex Organization. Borrowed from private museums and collections, they range from antique Rex memorabilia to Newcomb pottery and contemporary vessels created by local artists. The final image expresses the desire to continue and revere the process of rebirth and renewal, not just in our city, but in our shared universal experience.



Rex's 2026 Proclamation by artist Saskia Ozols

About the Rex Organization: Since the founding of the Rex Organization in 1872, its traditions have helped define Mardi Gras. Rex's proclamation invites his subjects to the grand celebration of Carnival. His royal colors of purple, gold, and green are to this day the colors of Mardi Gras, and the song played in the first Rex parade, "If Ever I Cease to Love," has become Carnival's anthem. Rex, the King of Carnival, and his consort, the Queen of Carnival, preside over the Rex Ball, Carnival's glittering conclusion. www.rexorganization.com

About the Pro Bono Publico Foundation: The Pro Bono Publico Foundation ("PBPF") is the Rex Organization's public education philanthropy association. Since its founding in 2006, the PBPF has donated more than \$15 million, including more than \$1 million annually for the past ten years to support New Orleans public school education, primarily charter schools, charter management organizations, and school support entities such as New Schools for New Orleans and Teach for America. Recently, the foundation created a Strategic Innovation Fund designed to make larger strategic investments aimed at addressing some of our more pressing challenges and high-leverage opportunities. Most of the PBPF's philanthropic funds are raised from annual donations from members of the Rex Organization. www.probonopublicofoundation.org