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Review: Nick Cave and Joyce Scott in Prospect.2



By D. Eric Bookhardt
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New York Times art critic Roberta Smith put it best: “Whether Nick Cave’s efforts qualify as fashion, body art or sculpture, and regardless of what you ultimately think of them, they fall squarely under the heading of Must Be Seen to Be Believed.” Of course, Smith never lived in a city with our Mardi Gras Indians, the next closest thing to Cave’s mixed-media *Soundsuits*, but she’s right: Their presence is redolent of exotic energies from the far reaches of the imagination — if not the planet. A former dancer turned instructor at the Chicago Art Institute, Cave made his early suits out of twigs before moving on to more colorful materials such as beads, buttons, sequins and feathers — a look not unlike Fi Yi Yi Big Chief Victor Harris’ striking Mardi Gras Indian suits at the New Orleans Museum of Art during Prospect.1. Former Prospect director Dan Cameron says Cave does include Mardi Gras Indians among his influences. Cave’s suits’ shamanic presence also recalls African ceremonial regalia, and they are worn in live performances, which makes them fine companion pieces for Joyce Scott’s beaded sculptures in the adjacent gallery. Also a performance artist deeply influenced by African and African-American traditions, Baltimore-based Scott is a creator of bead sculptures that are decorative yet acerbic, often beautiful yet biting. A critic of any form of violence, institutional and random, as well as all depredations against women, Scott knows how to be seductive without pulling her punches. *Cobalt, Yellow Circles* is a deeply hued maze with floating figures not unlike a Nigerian Yoruba beadwork version of a Navajo dream catcher. Nearby, a grotesque beaded head emerges from a green glass, pistol-shaped bottle filled with bullets. Titled *Head Shot*, it draws you in then creeps you out. The mix of seduction and revulsion, beauty and beastliness is what is known as the human condition, and what Scott and Cave do with it makes this show worth seeing.

Prospect.2: Works by Nick Cave and Joyce J. Scott
Newcomb Art Gallery, Tulane University, Woldenberg Art Center, 865-5328