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**THE MCA CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY WITH
MAJOR THREE-PART EXHIBITION: WE ARE HERE**

October 21, 2017 - January 28, 2018



Media Preview for WE ARE HERE is on Friday, October 20, at 10 am

The **Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago** celebrates its **50th anniversary** in October with an exciting series of exhibitions, programs, and events, and the unveiling of the building's new redesign. The centerpiece of the 50th anniversary is **We Are Here**, a major three-part exhibition drawn from the MCA's significant collection of contemporary masterworks that explores how contemporary art and culture have the power to change the way we see the world. The exhibition focuses on how contemporary artists critique the world around them and respond creatively and often provocatively, and how viewers have become an important part of that experience.

Each of the three parts of the *We Are Here* exhibition is organized by one of the MCA's global team of curators -- Senior Curator **Omar Kholeif**, Curator **Naomi Beckwith**, and Associate Curator **José Esparza** -- and feature artists from around the world working in a variety of media, including painting, sculpture, installation, sound, film, and video. Together, these three independently curated yet inter-related 'chapters' explore the relationship between artist and viewer and tell an evolving story of contemporary art.

José Esparza curates the first part of the exhibition, subtitled *I Am You*, which opens in advance on August 19 on the second floor. His selection of works questions how we relate to and shape our environments. It includes works by recognized artists such as **Francis Bacon, Jasper Johns, René Magritte, Marisol**, and **Shirin Neshat**, as well as younger artists, such as **Jonathas de Andrade** and **Lynette Yiadom-Boakye**—all of whom rely upon personal experiences to illuminate how contemporary art reflects the vastness of contemporary life. Artist **Tino Sehgal** presents his popular art experience *Kiss* during the exhibition (Oct 20 - Nov 25). Referencing a number of historical and contemporary sculptures entitled *Kiss*, this work choreographs two dancers based on a set of instructions created by Sehgal.



Naomi Beckwith's section on the fourth floor, *You Are Here*, examines how the role of the viewer has changed over time, from passive onlooker to active participant. Starting with the radical objects of the Minimalists, who made works that gallery visitors could walk through and step on, the exhibition also includes the works of artists who feature their bodies in their artworks, such as **Kenneth Josephson** and **Ana Mendieta**. More socially engaged works, such as **Adrian Piper** and **Marlene Dumas**, address the effect of certain power structures on bodies in the world, while artists such as **Huang Yong Ping** explore representations of political figures and political power.



Pierre Huyghe's performative work, *Name Announcer* is installed in the gallery for the first time since it was acquired. As visitors approach the entrance, a guard/town crier asks them for their full names and then proclaims their name loudly into the gallery.



Omar Kholeif presents artists who borrow from popular culture—soup cans, movie stills, neon signage, and floor tiles—to critique its workings. His section on the fourth floor, *We Are Everywhere*, features artists such as **Andy Warhol**, **Robert Rauschenberg**, and **Bruce Nauman**, as well as Chicago Imagists **Karl Wirsum** and **Roger Brown**, who re-present and reveal social realities that may otherwise go unnoticed. The exhibition also explores how, since the 1980s, artists such as **Jeff Koons**, **Cindy Sherman**, **Gillian Wearing**, and others have engaged with new forms of media to extend the reach of their own viewpoints and experiences. Figures such as **Barbara Kruger** and **Lawrence Abu Hamdan** encourage viewers to think twice about the power structures they engage with every day.

For the 50th anniversary, the MCA will have a range of smaller exhibitions exploring the history and collection of the museum -- from special commissions, to key masterworks from the collection, to new gifts and acquisitions.

The MCA has two major commissions on display for the 50th anniversary. The first is the return of audience favorite ***Felix***, a twenty-six-foot-tall fabricated cat skeleton by **Maurizio Cattelan**, on view from October 14, 2017 to April 8, 2018. Made specifically for the MCA's atrium, *Felix* plays with the popularity of prehistoric dinosaur skeletons like the Chicago Field Museum's T-Rex named Sue. *Felix* is a commanding sculpture meticulously fabricated to mimic the look and feel of a real animal skeleton, at once shocking and humorous as it challenges viewers' perceptions.



The second commission is a new site-specific wall mural by artist **Lorna Simpson**, who had her first museum show at the MCA in 1992 and went on to become the first African-American woman to show at the Venice Biennale. The mural, *Untitled*, is based on two smaller paintings, *Ice I* and *Ice II*, which feature found images of ice and an erupting volcano. This large-scale work juxtaposes the sublime yet disastrous imagery of smoke and ice with Ebony magazine clippings in the background. The mural is on view in the atrium from August 12, 2017 to July 29, 2018.

Heaven and Earth: Alexander Calder and Jeff Koons, on view October 21, 2017 to December 16, 2018, presents a selection of works from two contemporary art icons, **Jeff Koons** and **Alexander Calder**. Both Koons and Calder have played significant roles at the MCA, which has made a longstanding commitment to both artists with major exhibitions and extensive holdings in the MCA Collection. Calder had a retrospective at the MCA and a city celebration in 1974, as well as a landmark survey in 2010; while Koons had his first ever-museum exhibition at the MCA in 1988. In a new and unexpected conversation, viewers can see the sculptural work of these two established and playful artists.

To the Racy Brink – on view from July 1 to December 10, 2017 -- looks at the first decades of the museum with historical material that highlights some of the MCA's earliest vanguard programming and advertising. Since its founding in 1967, the MCA has been committed to supporting artistic experimentation and risk taking. Drawn from a selection of rare films, videos, and photographs from the MCA's archives, this is the first time the video of Chris Burden's *Doomed* (1975) has been displayed, giving viewers a glimpse of his 45-hour performance which intrigued and bewildered the city and tested the museum's obligation to the artist's vision and endurance. Also on view are a series of films made by David Katzive, the museum's first curator, capturing some of the MCA's earliest programming including Christo's first wrap of a building in the US, *Wrap In, Wrap Out* (1969), and the groundbreaking conceptual show *Art by Telephone* (1969), in which artists communicated instructions for creating work over the phone to MCA staff. In the 1980s, the museum began producing videos in conjunction with solo exhibitions, with the artists' insights into their work and creative process, including Vito Acconci, Jeff Koons, Lorna Simpson, and Fred Wilson.

Also on view as part of the 50th anniversary celebration, ***Woman with a Camera*** showcases a selection of works from a major gift of 50 photographs from Jack and Sandra Guthman's collection donated to the MCA for the museum's anniversary. Sharing the museum's dedication to collecting the work of contemporary female artists, the Guthman exhibition is comprised of photographs by 16 women from different backgrounds, generations, and practices, including established masters Catherine Opie, Laurie Simmons, and Carrie Mae Weems, as well as ascendant artists Anne Collier, Xaviera Simmons, and Mickalene Thomas. The women use photography to address politics, history, and identity, and explore central themes in contemporary photography: rendering the human figure, capturing public or private spaces, and commenting on our media-saturated culture. *Woman with a Camera* is on view from July 8, 2017 to January 14, 2018.

MCA ♥ Chicago

Saturday-Sunday, October 21-22, 2017

MCA ♥ Chicago celebrates the 50th anniversary of the MCA's founding with a free, weekend-long event consisting of programs, speakers, workshops, and interactive artist projects that draw on the history of the MCA and the city of Chicago. Admission is free all weekend and everyone can take part in programming designed and curated by artists from a range of disciplines. The weekend also marks the official launch of the museum's new community engagement space, the Commons, as well as the opening of the major collection exhibition, *We Are Here*.

The festivities start on Saturday with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the front steps of the museum. Throughout the day, visitors can experience performances by the Chicago Children's Choir, the South Shore Drill Team, Lou Malozzi, and Cauleen Smith's *Arkestra*, a collaboration with a group of 20 local artists. There are pop-up talks with major cultural figures in Chicago and a beer garden with Chicago-inspired cuisine on the sculpture garden terrace. The debut of *Open 24 Hours*, a site-specific project by Chicago artist Edra Soto will prompt visitors to consider civic engagement through interactive writing stations and workshops. Local artist Alberto Aguilar presents a project on the history of furniture in MCA exhibitions, while singer and activist Jamila Woods hosts a conversation in the theater. The evening culminates in a museum-wide 'happening' event, punctuated by DJ sets and special guest performances throughout the evening. Visitors are encouraged to attend in art-inspired attire.

Sunday highlights the MCA's history and future. Michael Rakowitz's pop-up food truck *Enemy Kitchen* is featured, serving Iraqi-Jewish dishes on the museum's front plaza as part of his major new exhibition. There are pop-up poetry slams in the museum's public spaces by Young Chicago Authors, along with MCA curators engaging the public in talks based on the themes in the *We Are Here* exhibition. Artist Brendan Fernandes enacts his dance-based work *Art by Snapchat*, a project inspired by the MCA's seminal exhibition *Art By Telephone* from 1969, in which artists communicated instructions for creating work over the phone to MCA staff. The 50th anniversary weekend is organized by MCA Curator of Public Programs January Parkos Arnall, with Ann Meisinger, Assistant Curator of Public Programs, and is co-produced with No Small Plans productions.

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René Magritte, *Les merveilles de la nature (The Wonders of Nature)*, 1953. © 2017 C. Herscovici/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York
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Jackie Frieze, 1964. © 2017 The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc./Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Photo: Nathan
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Koons, Photo: Nathan Keay, © MCA Chicago.

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The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District. The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open on Tuesday and Friday from 10 am to 9 pm, and Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm. The museum is closed on Mondays. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. The museum has a suggested general admission of \$15 for adults and \$8 for seniors. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at mcachicago.org or by phone at 312.280.2660.