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**MCA Chicago Announces *Frictions*, a Performance Suite Exploring Blackness through Bodily Movement**

CHICAGO— The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago, is thrilled to announce *Frictions* – a performance series that points to the transformative potential of the frictions or tensions created by Black movement within a society that reinforces racial divisions.

Taking place at the MCA from April to June, *Frictions* will be a suite of in-person performances and performance-driven video works created by three artists—Will Rawls (Brooklyn-based), Shamel Pitts | TRIBE (Brooklyn-based), and Barak adé Soleil (formerly of Chicago, now based in London). Each artist will explore questions of temporality, movement, and the frictions they inhabit through different relationships to pace, rhythm, and presence. The series will also challenge anti-Blackness by using bodily action to suspend perceptions and expectations of Black individuals. During the series kick-off, there will be a discussion between the three artists touching upon their methodology and work.

“We are so thrilled to be celebrating performance with ‘Frictions,’” said Madeleine Grynsztejn, Pritzker Director of the MCA. “The MCA is a place for artists and audiences to share their stories and interact on a broad, inclusive scale. ‘Frictions’ brings that and more to the table. We are excited to welcome guests into our multi-disciplinary space and find enrichment from the pivotal, ever-relevant narratives of these worldly artists.”

The artists’ works will occupy the museum’s theater and public spaces, while navigating the larger space of society. The series also interacts with the usual time-frame of the museum by taking place both over a long duration in the videos and through fleeting, limited-run performances.

“The idea of ‘Frictions’ is intentionally multiple. Each of these works points to the multitude of possibilities for Black lives and bodies through movement and performance,” said Tara Aisha Willis, Curator of Performance. “Taken together, these artists and their collaborators show how choreography can enact a productive resistance, right within its form and at the moment it encounters an audience. That’s the kind of friction that powerful artwork creates.”

*Frictions* is organized by Tara Aisha Willis, PhD, Curator in Performance, with Laura Paige Kyber, Curatorial Assistant in Performance. Additional support on Will Rawls, [*siccer*] provided by Nolan Jimbo, Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow.

Ticket sales will be announced soon.

### **FRICIONS: Performance Schedule**

Shamel Pitts | TRIBE, Touch of RED  
Edlis Neeson Theater  
April 6-8

In *Touch of RED*, two dancers perform inside a contemporary and voyeuristic boxing ring. The boxed-in site contains an intense energy created between the two built from the power of vulnerability, electrifying effeminacy, and the healing that occurs when Black men are allowed to soften, together.

To purchase performance tickets visit [experience.mcachicago.org/packages](http://experience.mcachicago.org/packages) or call 312-397-4010.

Will Rawls, [*siccer*]  
Edlis Neeson Theatre  
April 27-30

[*siccer*] takes the format of a stop-motion film shoot, with an automated camera taking a photograph of the performers every few seconds as they reenact iconic American films. During the breaks between shutter clicks, the camera fails to capture the dancers' movements, materializing the indeterminate space of the interval even as they are still seen and felt by the live audience. [*siccer*] will also be accompanied by a video installation, sited within the public spaces of the museum's building. Considered a diptych with the stage show, the installation will contain stop-motion video footage that relates to the performance's film shoot.

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Barak adé Soleil, *SHIFT*  
MCA  
Performance May 6

In *SHIFT*, scale is used to amplify the presence of disabled bodies by infiltrating the museum's public spaces both digitally and physically. In the dream-like video installation, Black and Brown bodies are visible on screen at life-size and larger-than-life scale. They appear both in repose and in transition, offering possibilities for an alternate relationship to time that is full of motion and change, but that values presence and liveness. For the live event, performers traverse the museum's inaccessible staircases in a promenade that recalibrates the flows of activity within the museum, making visible the complexities of intersectional disabled bodies in real time and space.

*Video installation and in-person performance included with museum admission.*

*Video installation included with museum admission. To purchase performance tickets visit [experience.mcachicago.org/packages](http://experience.mcachicago.org/packages) or call 312-397-4010.*

### **About the Artists**

**Shamel Pitts** is the founding artistic director of Brooklyn-based arts collective, TRIBE, a multidisciplinary arts collective dedicated to creative live art projects that elicit human connection and imagine new futures for Black people. Pitts began his dance career in Mikhail Baryshnikov's Hell's Kitchen Dance and BJM\_Danse Montreal. Shamel danced with Batsheva Dance Company for 7 years, under the artistic direction of Ohad Naharin and is a certified teacher of Gaga movement language. He is an adjunct at The Juilliard School and has been an artist in residence at Harvard University. Shamel is the choreographer of the play "Help" by acclaimed poet and playwright Claudia Rankine, directed by Taibi Magar, and commissioned at The Shed in New York. He is the recipient of a 2018 Princess Grace Award in Choreography, and a 2020 Guggenheim Fellowship.

**Barak adé Soleil** is an artist who works from the belief that blackness, disability and neurodiversity, and queerness are inextricable from and mutually constitutive of each other. adé Soleil is the founder of D UNDERBELLY, an interdisciplinary network of artists of color, and recipient of the prestigious Katherine Dunham Choreography Award given by New York's AUDELCO for Excellence in Black Theatre. Other acknowledgements for creative work include a 3Arts Foundation Award (2016); 3Arts Robert Rauschenberg Residency Fellowship (2017); and Art Matters Foundation Award (2017 and 2020). Presentations include "from here to there" for the 2018 exhibition Chicago Disability Activism, Arts, and Design, 1970's to Today at Gallery 400, University of Illinois Chicago and "a series of movements" for both the 2018 7a\*11d International Festival of Performance Art, Toronto, and VAE Raleigh's Everyday Series at Contemporary Art Museum of Raleigh, North Carolina. At 205 Hudson Street Gallery, New York, the work markings premiered as part of the 2019 group exhibition Refiguring The Future. Internationally, adé Soleil has served as inaugural faculty for the 2021 Wildseed Centre for Arts & Activism Fellowship in Toronto, developed creative communal work at Montréal Arts Interculturels, co-curated The TALK for the Prismatic Arts Festival in Ottawa, and presented in the UK symposium New Possibilities for Performance in Birmingham. Currently, Barak is the inaugural Embodied Thinker-in-Residence for Candoco Dance Company in London, and mentoring for the PEERS exchange program through Zurich University of the Arts.

**Will Rawls** is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice encompasses choreography, dance, video, sculpture, works on paper and installation. Rawls is best-known for his choreographic work that employs repetition to explore the limits of language and gesture as tools for staging performances of black presence and becoming. Rawls has created a solo exhibition for Adams + Ollman Gallery (2022) and a multi-part installation at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, Everlasting Stranger (2021), as well as presenting work at the Museum of Modern Art, the Hirshhorn Museum, Performa 15, Danspace Project, The Chocolate Factory Theater, High Line Art, REDCAT, the 10th Berlin Biennale, and the Hessel Museum at Bard College. He has received fellowships and residencies from the Guggenheim Foundation, The Alpert Foundation, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Mellon Foundation, United States Artists, the Rauschenberg Foundation, Creative Capital, New England Foundation for the Arts, National Performance Network, MAP Fund, the MacDowell Colony, Headlands Center for the Arts, and Movement Research. Rawls has newly joined UCLA's Department of World Arts and cultures/Dance as an Associate Professor of Choreography. In 2016, Rawls co-curated Lost and Found—six weeks of performances at Danspace Project that addressed the intergenerational impact of HIV/AIDS. His writing has been published by the Hammer Museum, MoMA, Museu de Arte de São Paulo, *Dancing While Black Journal*, *Brooklyn Rail* and *Artforum*.

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The MCA is a proud member of the Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

## **ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART CHICAGO**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The MCA interweaves exhibitions, performances, collections, and educational programs while providing a place for audiences to contemplate and discuss contemporary art in pursuit of a creative and diverse future. The MCA believes in the values of inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility (IDEA) as a platform to enact structural change. 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 and is open 10 am to 5 pm Wednesday to Sunday and Tuesdays (free for IL residents) from 10 am to 9 pm. The museum is closed on Mondays. 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. Find more information about MCA's exhibitions, programs, and special events at [mcachicago.org](http://mcachicago.org) or at 312.280.2660.