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Performance view, cat mahari: *blk ark: the impossible manifestation*, Culture Hub, New York City, November 18, 2022. Photo: Lívía Sá, courtesy of Culture Hub.

Multimedia Material:

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MCA Chicago Announces *Chicago Performs*, a showcase of performance works by Chicago artists

CHICAGO— The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago is thrilled to announce the 2024 *Chicago Performs* showcase—an intimate festival of live arts highlighting essential local artists on a national platform. The 2024 iteration of *Chicago Performs* includes work by Lynkanthea, Every house has a door, and cat mahari, who will present a variety of performances across the MCA's grounds, including the Edlis Neeson Theater and the Anne & John Kern Terrace Garden.

Their works include a play-inspired performance, lush and environmental musical activations that transform the MCA Stage, and an outdoor performance inspired by *The Carnival of the Animals* that addresses climate change.

Each year through the *Chicago Performs* series, the MCA invites three to four artists to share works of performance, including pieces this year that have been developed through the MCA's [In Progress](#) series and the [New Works Initiative](#). Bringing together live arts from across genres, *Chicago Performs* supports artists who are entering a new phase of their practice—whether stepping onto a larger stage for the first time, exploring new directions, or expanding the scale of their projects—and offers the public an unprecedented chance to witness the city's groundbreaking performance artists in action.

Chicago Performs is organized by Laura Paige Kyber, Assistant Curator of Performance.

Tickets for *Chicago Performs* will be on sale starting June 26. To purchase tickets visit experience.mcachicago.org/packages or call 312-397-4010.

Chicago Performs Programs

Lykanthea | *Some Viscera*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Sep 26–27, 2024 | 7:30 pm

Lykanthea is a multidisciplinary collective led by artist Lakshmi Ramgopal whose performances and installations use pop idioms to experiment with traditional South Asian art forms. Her latest work, *Some Viscera*, is a live concert that features a collection of songs and movement accompanied by an immersive stage design that will transform the MCA Stage into a lush garden. The project features a multidisciplinary ensemble starring Asha Rowland, Erica Miller, Johanna Brock, and Ben Zucker. Together, they integrate elements of Carnatic music, Bharatanatyam dance, and Sanskrit and Tamil poetry, into a performance of rich, intimate dance theater. The premiere of *Some Viscera* occurs within the framework of the *arangetram*, a Tamil word meaning “ascending the stage.” It describes the arduous, long-form, solo performance through which students of classical Indian dance and music—mostly children—debut as mature artists—a celebrated but fraught rite of passage. The *arangetram* of *Some Viscera* consists of four principal movements. Each invokes avian and floral motifs from sources that include ancient classical dance and music, medieval Sanskrit poetry, the literary culture of India's independence movement, and Indian films of the late 1990s. By creating this fanciful world, the movements reflect on cultural knowledge and breakdown.

In 2019, Lykanthea presented an early iteration of *Some Viscera* as a part of the MCA's [In Progress](#) series, and has performed at the MCA's 50th Anniversary celebration in 2017.

Every house has a door and Essi Kausalaninen | *Broken Aquarium*

Kern Terrace

Sep 28, 2024 | 2:00 pm

Sep 29, 2024 | 4:00 pm

Broken Aquarium takes its cue from Camille Saint-Saëns's 1886 musical suite for children *The Carnival of the Animals*. Riffing on the famed *Aquarium* movement, this performance updates Saint-Saëns's work for today and surveys an impossible ecosystem of endangered or extinct sea creatures. Featuring handmade costumes by Finnish artist Essi Kausalainen and live music by Tim Kinsella and Jenny Polus, this performance presents, through poetry, sound, and movement, the intricacies and particulars of non-human life as a foundation for human transformation. The performance will take place on the MCA's Anne & John Kern Terrace Garden. Guests will be able to watch from the lawn's center steps or from atop the terrace.

The project first started in 2018, when Every house has a door director Lin Hixson and dramaturg Matthew Goulish initiated *The Carnival of the Animals* with Helsinki-based artist Essi Kausalainen.

cat mahari | *blk ark: the impossible manifestation*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Sep 28, 2024 | 7:30 pm

Sep 29, 2024 | 2:00 pm

cat mahari's *blk ark: the impossible manifestation* is an interactive performance with live, semi-improvisational sound elements that draw from hip-hop, house, dance, and film. Exploring improvisational and Black cultural strategies of play, drawn from traditions such as *joanin'* (Atlanta slang for ritualized insult exchanges, otherwise known as The Dozens) and the soul clap, mahari's performance explores forms of survival and liberation, revealing questions about what it will take to find freedom and map our collective future.

cat's project has been presented as an [In Progress program in 2022](#). It has been developed with the support of the [New Works Initiative](#) Chicago Commission Program, which fosters the artistic and professional growth of Chicago artists, providing consistent and comprehensive support for their development.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Lakshmi Ramgopal is the multidisciplinary artist behind Lykanthea. Experimenting with traditional South Asian art forms, she creates performances and installations in spaces that range from museum galleries to botanical conservatories to the middle of a freshwater stream. Her 2014 EP *Migration* put her on the map among experimental and pop music fans for her alchemical use of synths, catchy melodies, and Carnatic improvisatory techniques. Her work has been commissioned by Krannert Art Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Experimental Sound Studio, and Edgar Miller Legacy.

Lin Hixson, director, and **Matthew Goulish**, dramaturg, formed Every house has a door in 2008 to convene diverse, intergenerational, project-specific teams of specialists, including emerging as well as internationally recognized artists. Drawn to historically or critically neglected subjects, Every house creates performance works and performance-related projects in many media. Based in Chicago, the company presents work for local, national, and international audiences.

Longstanding leaders in Chicago's performance community, Hixson and Goulish have mentored generations of young artists through the performance department at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and through their former collective, Goat Island, which toured works internationally from the mid-1980s to 2007.

Essi Kausalainen's works operate through performance, textile, text, audio, and video. Collaborating with plants, fungi, artists, musicians, plant biologists, and children, Kausalainen approaches the body as an open-ended process made in, and shaped by, its complex relations with other beings, situations, and environments. Her work has been exhibited and performed in venues such as Kiasma, HAM, Inkonst (Malmö), Somerset House Studios in London, Bildmuseet (Umeå), and Moderna Museet Malmö.

cat mahari's practice is built from a richly layered history of the body, stemming from an archive of research, physical training, and an intent to manifest an intellectual, material, and informal legacy of Black liberation through documentation. By examining personal marks and socio-genealogical maps, she explores inner and outer environments. She is a 2023 MAP Fund microgrant recipient, and a 2022 Foundation for the Arts Emergency grantee for *blk ark: the impossible manifestation*. Her upcoming works include the film *Sugar in the Raw*, a surrealist-inspired exploration of Black intimacy, trust, and touch via Chicago house dance and stepping. In 2021, she was named the City of Chicago Esteemed Artist Awardee in Dance and received a 2021 3Arts Award in dance. mahari holds a BFA in dance from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, and an MA in performance, practice, and research from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama at the University of London.

SUPPORT

Chicago Performs is supported by the New Works Initiative, which puts the creative process at the heart of the MCA's relationship with Chicago by supporting the development of new performances and creative projects.

Lead support for the New Works Initiative is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

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. 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 or at 312.280.2660.



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