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Performance view, Kaneza Schaal: *KLII*, The Under the Radar Festival, Chelsea Factory, 2023. Photo © 2023 Maria Baranova.

Multimedia Material:

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MCA Chicago announces *On Stage: Lineages*, a showcase of performance works moving toward canon correction

CHICAGO — The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago today announces the return of the *On Stage* performance series. Since 2022, the *On Stage* series has focused on a curatorial theme that rotates annually. This spring, *On Stage* takes *Lineages* as its guiding concept, featuring four works that explore notions of identity and shared history from outside and within the art world. Running from January to April 2025, *Lineages* moves to interrogate mainstream, Western ideas about what is considered “contemporary” in performance art, especially when non-

Western art forms have historically been categorized as “traditional” or “cultural” despite developing synchronously and at times appropriated by Western artists as foundation for the new. In doing so, *Lineages* examines the plurality and multiplicities of timelines and artistic developments, reshaping what we consider to be new.

Performances include Elisa Harkins’s *Wampum / DSW JSJJ*, a music and dance performance combining disco and Indigenous language; Anne Collod’s *Moving Alter-natives*, a dance examining modern dance history through the lenses of gender, postcolonialism, and cultural appropriation; Miguel Gutierrez’s *Super Nothing*, a dance that works with his personal performance archive to examine how our past can provide a blueprint for honesty in the present; and Kaneza Schaal’s *KLII*, a theater-based performance that considers present-day remnants of colonialism through an avatar of King Leopold II’s ghost.

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

Tickets for Lineages will be on sale starting December 11. To purchase tickets visit experience.mcachicago.org or call 312-397-4010.

***Lineages* Programs**

Elisa Harkins | *Wampum / DSW JSJJ*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Jan 31–Feb 1, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Wampum / DSW JSJJ is an ongoing performance project by visual artist and musician Elisa Harkins featuring her original, upbeat electronic dance music and more contemplative moments of hymns, both with lyrics in Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), and English. As an act of Indigenous Futurism, the concert-like project combines disco and Indigenous language to alter the fate of these endangered languages through live performance, preservation on pressed vinyl, and radio play. At the MCA, Harkins will appear with two back-up dancers and musical guests Danny Wesley and Kalyn Fay.

Some of the music in the performance is inspired by Daniel Chazanoff’s twentieth-century transcriptions of Indigenous songs. The title, *Wampum / DSW JSJJ*, refers to Wampum belts and beads, used by the Cherokee as currency and more broadly by Indigenous peoples of the Eastern Woodlands to mark agreements between people. DSW JSJJ, pronounced “a-de-la di-ga-gu-di,” can be translated to “money on a string.” Aptly named, the work is intended to create a metaphorical peacekeeping agreement between audience members, regardless of race or tribe.

In the week before the concert, Harkins will lead a community drum making workshop at the Center for Native Futures.

In 2021, Harkins participated in the [MCA’s virtual symposium, *Fractures: Creating Around Devastation*](#).

Anne Collod | *Moving alter-natives*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Feb 13–15, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Where is the line between cultural appropriation and celebration? How has the blurriness between these two concepts affected the legacy of American modern dance? In *Moving alter-natives*, Anne Collod looks at the foundations of modern dance in the United States, including the gender roles and colonialist perspectives that inspired some of our most lauded dance icons.

At the heart of *Moving alter-natives* is the faithful reprise of solo and group pieces by choreographers Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, widely known as the founders of modern dance in the US. With a culturally and artistically diverse cast of six international performers including Sherwood Chen, Ghyslaine Gau, Nitsan Margalio, Calixto Neto, Pol Pi, and Damini Gairola, *Moving alter-natives* scrutinizes these historic dances in restagings that explore their aesthetic impacts and political stakes. In doing so, the performers confront St. Denis and Shawn's appropriation of South Asian, East Asian, and Native American cultures, which was prevalent during the colonial eras of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Recreations in this work include three solo pieces by Ruth St. Denis, including *Incense* (1906), *Lazy Nautch* (1917), and *Kashmiri Nautch* (1919), and excerpts of group pieces by Ted Shawn, including *The Dome* (1910) and *Kinetic Molpai* (1935), with different interpretations led by the six performers.

[Collod's Bessie-winning reinterpretation of Anna Halperin's *Parades & Changes*](#) was presented at the MCA in 2009.

Miguel Gutierrez | *Super Nothing*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Mar 28–29, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Mar 30, 2025 | 2:00 pm

An exploration of the intersections between art and life, *Super Nothing* features a diverse ensemble of performers from New York and Los Angeles, Miguel Gutierrez's two artistic homes. This thought-provoking performance uses Gutierrez's personal, bicoastal performance history to evaluate the body's role in a variety of ways: in community, in racial identity, in intimacy, in emotion, and in our own personal narratives, as well as those we share with each other.

Inspired by bell hooks's statement that by "moving, we confront the realities of choice and location," the four performers of *Super Nothing* navigate a shifting physical terrain of intimacy, negotiation, and pent-up feeling to create a world where we rethink what it means to come together. This emotionally charged dance experience invites audiences to consider how we pay attention to each other and how we make space for belonging.

Super Nothing is co-commissioned by New York Live Arts, CAP UCLA, and MCA Chicago with support from the National Performance Network.

Super Nothing is commissioned, produced, and presented by New York Live Arts as part of the Randjelović /Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist Program, with lead support from the Mellon Foundation. The world premiere will take place at New York Live Arts in 2025.

Kaneza Schaal | *KLII*

Edlis Neeson Theater

Apr 17–19, 2025 | 7:30 pm

KLII exorcises the ghost of King Leopold II of Belgium, the founder and sole owner of the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908, through a mytho-biographical performance by theater-maker Kaneza Schaal. *KLII* explores the nature of evil and what is required to unroot legacies of catastrophic events. Schaal says, “[the] work is a repossession of canon and resituating of this canon within our own histories as black people.”

Schaal herself takes on the avatar of King Leopold II for a portion of the performance, wearing his royal regalia, sitting on an extravagant throne, and contemplating his Free State of Congo while workers toil at his side. Additional visuals designed by Christopher Myers, including a towering set design and tinted projections of text, mix colonial aesthetics with East African design, drawing on a number of previous works confronting the Belgian rule of Congo from the nineteenth century until independence, including pamphlets, documentaries, and Patrice Lumumba’s 1960 independence speech. Working with East African musicians and African American opera singers, the hybrid, operatic, and intensifying sound design takes inspiration from *La Muette de Portici*, the opera that played a role in Belgium’s 1830 revolution. Together, the visual and sound design combine to consider the residue of colonialism in our everyday lives.

Audience engagement is a central detail in *KLII*. Viewers can take part in a procession in front of King Leopold’s specter, as well as participate in a handwashing ceremony during the performance.

Schaal’s work, [JACK &](#), was presented at the MCA in 2018.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Elisa Harkins is an artist, singer, electronic music composer, and curator. Her work is concerned with the body, language revitalization, and Indigenous music. She has exhibited and performed at Crystal Bridges, Portland Institute of Contemporary Art, the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Montréal, arts interculturels, and REDCAT. Harkins has received awards from Creative Capital, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Harpo Foundation, and the Mid-America Arts Alliance. Harkins is an enrolled member of the Muscogee Nation.

Anne Collod is a French contemporary dancer and choreographer. She danced for various choreographers and started her own work focused on the reinterpretation of major dance works from the past, as well as on utopias of the collective. In her projects, she links performance, research, and teaching. She received a Bessie Award in 2009 for *parades & changes, replays*, the reinterpretation of Anna Halprin’s major work *Parades & Changes* (1965). She is the recipient of the French Villa Medici Hors les Murs program for her artistic research on the *Dances of the Dead*, which led her to create *The Parliament of the Invisibles* in 2014, a dance piece haunted by the German danse macabre from the 1930s. She teaches in various contexts and is certified in the Feldenkrais technique.

Miguel Gutierrez is a choreographer, music artist, writer, visual artist, educator, podcaster, community advocate, and Feldenkrais Method practitioner living between Lenape/Canarsie

land, colonially known as Brooklyn, New York, and Tongva and Gabrielino land, colonially known as Los Angeles, California. His work centers attention as a material form and as a means to unravel normative belief systems. He creates empathetic and irreverent spaces for QTPOC folx (including himself) to dream, find agency, and process grief. His strategies include, as Siobhan Burke has written in *The New York Times*, “trenchant, darkly funny structural critiques, addressing the faults in the very systems that undergird his artmaking.” His work has been presented nationally and internationally in venues such as Festival d’Automne/Paris, the Walker Art Center, and in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. He is a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, Foundation for Contemporary Arts Award, four NY Dance and Performance “Bessie” Awards, and a 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award. He is an Associate Professor of Choreography at UCLA in the department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, where he also serves as Vice Chair for the MFA in Choreographic Inquiry.

Kaneza Schaal is a New York City based artist working in theater, opera, and film. Most recently, she presented her original performance *GO FORTH* at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, during the museum’s first curation of live work into an exhibition and catalog. Schaal directed the 2023 Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Omar*, which showed at Spoleto Festival USA, Los Angeles Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera, and upcoming at Chicago Lyric Opera. By creating performances that speak many formal, cultural, historical, aesthetic, and experiential languages she seeks expansive audiences. Schaal's work has been shown in divergent contexts, from NYC galleries, to courtyards in Vietnam, to East African amphitheatres, to European opera houses, to US public housing, to rural auditoriums in the United Arab Emirates. Domestically her work has been shown at The Kennedy Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Shed, Walker Arts Center, The New Victory Theater, and New Orleans Center for Contemporary Art. Schaal was named a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow and received a 2021 Herb Alpert Award in Theatre, a 2019 United States Artists Fellowship, a SOROS Art Migration and Public Space Fellowship, and a 2018 Ford Foundation Art For Justice Bearing Witness Award.

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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. 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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