

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Firelei Báez, *Untitled (Les tables de géographie réduites en un jeu de cartes)*, 2022. Oil, acrylic, and inkjet on canvas; 82 3/8 × 105 3/4 in. (209.2 × 268.4 cm). Collection of Deborah Beckmann and Jacob Kotzubei. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth, New York. © Firelei Báez. Photo: Jackie Furtado.

Multimedia Material:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/frhp6p42v2rddv1ja07yb/ACkmUDG4PI8snNUKz1XfKJw?rlkey=4h8svtf3kds9yjpp7uzstu4wf&st=xwmf8l7o&dl=0>

MCA Chicago Announces Chicago Presentation of *Firelei Báez*

CHICAGO –The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is excited to announce the Chicago presentation of *Firelei Báez*, the first North American survey exhibition of the artist (b.1980, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; lives in New York) running from November 15, 2025, to May 31, 2026. Spanning two decades of Báez’s spirited practice, this landmark exhibition showcases her vibrant and captivating paintings and installations. Through a bold visual language that blends folklore, fantasy, mythology and science fiction, Báez constructs layered worlds that challenge dominant historical narratives and unsettle the often-fixed categories of race, gender and nationality. In this exhibition, Báez also emphasizes resilience and creative agency, especially among marginalized communities who have always found ways to create refuge and power in

defiance of systems of repression.

Known for her richly pigmented, multidisciplinary approach, Báez combines saturated colors, intricate patterns and expressive figuration with abstract gestures, architectural plans, colonial-era maps and culturally resonant symbols. Her work draws deeply from Afro-Caribbean traditions and acts as a cultural and historical crossroads for the enduring legacies of colonialism across the Americas, the African Diaspora and the cultural nexus of the Caribbean. This major exhibition reaffirms Báez's place as one of the most compelling and visionary artists of her generation.

In addition to her dynamic paintings, the exhibition will feature one of her more immersive pieces, *A Drexycen chronocommons (To win the war you fought it sideways)* (2019), which will occupy an entire gallery at the MCA. This large-scale work consists of paintings, mesh, papier-mâché, cutout tarp and plants that, together, transport visitors into one of Báez's created worlds. Chicago is also highlighted in the exhibition: *The trace, whether we are attending to it or not (a space for each other's breathing)* (2019) features a ciguapa (a feminine, trickster creature from Dominican folklore) bending over an architectural plan of the Illinois Central Railroad, uniting both sides of the tracks, which run between New Orleans and Chicago, to restore the divisions left by colonial trade.

Firelei Báez is organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston and curated by Eva Respini, Deputy Director and Director of Curatorial Programs, Vancouver Art Gallery (former Barbara Lee Chief Curator, ICA/Boston), with Tessa Bachi Haas, Assistant Curator, ICA/Boston. The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presentation is organized by Carla Acevedo-Yates, former Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator and Director of Curatorial Initiatives, with Cecilia González Godino, former Marjorie Susman Curatorial Fellow, and Iris Colburn, Curatorial Associate.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Firelei Báez (b. 1980, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic; lives in New York)

was born to a Dominican mother and a father of Haitian descent. Her upbringing between Hispaniola's two countries, which have a longstanding history of tension predicated on ethnic difference, informs her concerns with the politics of place and heritage. She currently lives and works in New York City.

Báez received an M.F.A. from Hunter College, a B.F.A. from the Cooper Union's School of Art, and studied at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. She is the subject of her first major US survey, which originated at the ICA/Boston, curated by Eva Respini, and is now traveling. Her work has been presented in many significant international exhibitions, including the inaugural installation of the ICA Watershed, Boston (2021), curated by Eva Respini, which traveled to The Momentary in Bentonville, Arkansas; and *The Milk of Dreams* at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022), curated by Cecilia Alemani. Recent solo presentations of Báez's work include exhibitions at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh; and Pérez Art Museum Miami. The artist has recently participated in a number of group exhibitions at major institutions, such as the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Cleveland Museum of Art; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; Baltimore Museum of Art; and Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai. She is the recipient of many awards, most recently the Cooper Union President's Citation (2022), Artes Mundi Prize (2021), and Philip Guston Rome Prize (2021). Báez's work is held in many significant private and public collections; the latter include the Baltimore Museum of Art; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AR; Dallas Museum of Art; Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; The Marieluise Hessel Collection, Hessel Museum of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Nasjonalmuseet, Oslo; Pérez Art Museum Miami; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Sindika Dokolo Foundation, Luanda,

Angola; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; Tate, London; and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

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This exhibition is supported by the MCA's Women Artists Initiative, a philanthropic commitment to further equity across gender lines and promote the work and ideas of women artists.

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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. The MCA acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council. 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 from 10 am to 9 pm. Tuesday evenings (5-9 pm) are free for Illinois residents. The museum is closed on Mondays. Admission is free for all youth 18 and under, members of the military and veterans, and MCA members. Free admission for anyone 18 and under is generously

provided by Liz and Eric Lefkowsky, and Northern Trust. Find more information about MCA's exhibitions, programs, and special events at mcachicago.org or at 312.280.2660.



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