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Doug Ischar, *Marginal Waters #9*, 1985/2009. Inkjet print from color transparency; 28 × 40 in. (71.1 × 101.6 cm). Courtesy of the artist.

Multimedia material:

https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/offj48zaqni5mmqd0refs/ANewud_XF1QxeNTsKWSPR74?rlkey=dlcdnzqn09q3s2bo7lbedyor2&st=jh70hu8j&dl=0

MCA Chicago to open *City in a Garden: Queer Art and Activism in Chicago* on July 5, 2025

CHICAGO—The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is excited to announce its latest exhibition, [*City in a Garden: Queer Art and Activism in Chicago*](#), opening on July 5, 2025. The exhibition highlights Chicago's essential yet often overlooked role in the stories of queer art and activism, examining the city's queer history from the 1980s to the present. The exhibition's title is based on Chicago's official motto, *Urbs in Horto*, meaning "city in a garden." In the context of this presentation, the title speaks to the exhibited artists' and activists' utopian visions of a metropolitan sanctuary for people of all races, genders, and sexualities. These visions remain

ever urgent, as queer people continue to fight for their lives and livelihoods under ongoing and renewed political threats.

The earliest works in *City in a Garden* date to the 1980s, when activists radically mobilized in response to the US government's disastrous handling of the AIDS crisis. Around that time, the historically pejorative epithet "queer" began to be reclaimed as a liberatory term encompassing all who purposefully deviated from heteronormative society. Organized around five themes—Garden, Club, Street, Cinema, and Utopia—the exhibition draws on this history of activism to map the ways queer life in Chicago has taken shape, as well as the ways it continues to be imagined.

Drawing from the MCA Collection and key loans from local collections, *City in a Garden* features over thirty artists and collectives who address the show's themes through diverse media and methods, including social documentary photography of clandestine queer spaces; craft-informed sculpture that challenges normative depictions of gender and sexuality; drawings, paintings, and videos that explore queer intimacy; archival materials related to groups who innovatively combine artistic and activist strategies; and more. Artists include Doug Ischar, Patric McCoy, Amina Ross, Edie Fake, Jeanne Dunning, Nick Cave, Diana Solís, and Brendan Fernandes. Fernandes's installation, *The Rite* (2019), will be activated with performances throughout the show's run; times will be announced on the exhibition webpage.

In addition to in-gallery activations, the MCA will also host a series of programs centered on the themes of *City in a Garden*. Included in these events is the return of the [MCA's Primetime celebration, which will feature Smartbar's legendary LGBTQ+ party Queen!](#), on July 18, 2025.

City in a Garden: Queer Art and Activism in Chicago is organized by Jack Schneider, Assistant Curator, with Korina Hernandez, Curatorial Assistant.

SUPPORT

Lead support is provided by the Harris Family Foundation in memory of Bette and Neison Harris, the Zell Family Foundation, Cari and Michael Sacks, and R. H. Defares.

Major support is provided by Laura and Tony Davis, Linden Capital Partners; Robin Loewenberg Tebbe and Mark Tebbe; and Charlotte R. Cramer Wagner and Herbert S. Wagner III of Wagner Foundation.

Generous support is provided by Gary Metzner and Scott Johnson.

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.



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 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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