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**August 7, 2024**

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Red Clay Dance Company, *Written on the Flesh*. Photo: M. Reid Photography.

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**MCA Chicago's fourth annual *Chicago Performs* series planned for September 18–21**

CHICAGO— The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago's 2025 [Chicago Performs](#) showcase—an intimate festival of live arts highlighting essential local artists on a national platform—will kick off on September 18, 2025, and run through September 21, 2025. The fourth iteration of *Chicago Performs* includes work by Robyn Mineko Williams & Artists, Helen Lee/Momentum Sensorium, and Red Clay Dance Company. Taking place in the MCA's Commons and Edlis Neeson Theater, this year's performances will delve into themes of memory, remembrance, grief, and making space for joy and healing.

Launched in 2022, the *Chicago Performs* series invites a small cohort of Chicago-based artists to

share works of performance live at the MCA, including pieces that have been developed through the MCA's [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.

**For interview inquiries, [please contact the MCA media relations team](#) no later than September 8, 2025.**

To purchase tickets please visit the webpage at [visit.mcachicago.org/chicago-performs-2025](https://visit.mcachicago.org/chicago-performs-2025) or call 312-397-4010.

## ***Chicago Performs Programs***

### **Robyn Mineko Williams & Artists | *To Leave You***

Edlis Neeson Theater

Sep 18–19, 2025 | 7:30 pm, approx. 1 hour run time

In *To Leave You*, choreographer Robyn Mineko Williams explores memory and the residue of our lives in a new, cinematic dance piece alongside dancers Jessica Tong and Jason Hortin, musician Nate Kinsella, and visual designer Julia Miller. Inspired by the loss of her creative muses, Williams and her team seamlessly and intimately blend dreamy movement, music, and film with shadow puppetry to weave a tapestry of scenes investigating the idea of the “trace:” a mapping of essences, memories, and the messages we leave behind when we exit this world.

*To Leave You* is supported by the MCA's [New Works Initiative](#), a platform that fosters the artistic and professional growth of Chicago-based artists.

### **Helen Lee/Momentum Sensorium | *Curiosities of Wellness in Bodies of Grief and Joy***

The Commons

September 20, 2025 | 10:30 am–1:30 pm and 3–6 pm

*Curiosities of Wellness in Bodies of Grief and Joy* is movement artist Helen Lee's ongoing invitation to audiences to sit with anger and loss by exploring collective healing through somatic practice. Bringing together offerings of performance, live music, art and movement therapy, plant medicine, and shared dialogue, Lee guides audiences through a series of mindfulness rituals, inviting them to find ease, grounding, and joy. Throughout the course of the day, Lee will provide an array of somatic rituals that include meditation, interactive performance, and a walk to Lake Michigan.

### **Red Clay Dance Company | *Freedom Square: The Black Girlhood Altar***

Edlis Neeson Theater

Sep 20–21, 2025 | 7:30 pm, approx. 1 hour run time

Centered around *The Black Girlhood Altar*, an installation created by Scheherazade Tillet and

Robert Narcisco of A Long Walk Home, the Chicago-based nonprofit focused on ending violence against women and girls, this new, choreographic performance transforms the theater into a sanctuary of utopian freedom for the Black women and girls by blending dance, song, digital media, and stage design to create a profound and resonant experience. Featuring music by Jamila Woods and choreography by artistic director Vershawn Sanders-Ward, the work is performed by a mixed cast of the Red Clay Dance Company and teens from Black Girls Dance.

The original *Black Girlhood Altar*, assembled by A Long Walk Home artists Scheherazade Tillet and Robert Narcisco, is a mixed-media, object-based installation created to transform public spaces from spaces of trauma to spaces of collective remembrance and power. The living altar honors eight Black women and girls: Rekia Boyd, Latasha Harlins, Ma'Khia Bryant, "Hope," "Harmony," Marcie Gerald, Lyniah Bell, and Breonna Taylor. Tillet and Narcisco's [Black Girlhood Altar](#) was previously on view at the MCA as a part of the 2021 exhibition [Andrea Bowers](#).

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

**Robyn Mineko Williams** is a director and artist from Chicago, IL. She is drawn to embodiments of memory, time, lineage, and our relationships with the traces left in us of the people we encounter. Robyn is the founder and director of Robyn Mineko Williams & Artists (RMW&A), which houses and shares a body of interdisciplinary performance created in collaboration with an evolving roster of dynamic artists and designers. Prioritizing public, malleable forms of presentation, RMW&A creates by intertwining performance, design, people, and place. Robyn's work has been presented at the Kennedy Center, Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Thalia Hall, Jacob's Pillow, the Joyce Theater, MCA Chicago, and more.

**Helen Lee (she/they)** was born and raised in Chicago to immigrant parents from South Korea. She received her MFA with a focus in Performance and Film from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and BA in Dance with a minor in Theatre from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She has presented works in the United States South Korea, Japan, Germany, Iceland, Finland, and Canada. She has been awarded Chicago Artist Coalition's (CAC) SPARK Grant, the SAIC's Graduate Dean Professional Development Award to attend the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics Convergence hosted by York University and was Chicago Moving Company's D49 Awardee and Affiliate Artist for Dance Shelter. They were named 2022 Newcity Breakout Artist: Chicago's Next Generation of Image Makers and was a finalist for 2023 Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist. Lee presented a solo exhibition at CICA Museum in South Korea and an exhibition at Roots and Culture gallery. Their artist residencies include CAC HATCH, Links Hall Co-MISSION, DanceBridge at Chicago Cultural Center, Butoh Centrum MAMU, Arteles Creative Center, Fish Factory - Creative Centre of Stöðvarfjörður, KuBa: kulturbahnhof, and Cel del Nord, to name a few. Their performance works and writings have been published in *Emergency INDEX* Volumes 8 and 9 by Ugly Duckling Press; *CICA Art Now 2019*, *antirrhinum Issue 2: Hauntings/I* and *Quince Magazine* (Issue Three: Winter 2020–21); and their films have been presented by Chicago Park District's Chicago OnScreen, New Blood Festival XII, and Experimental Dance Virginia.

**Red Clay Dance**, Chicago's premier Afro-contemporary dance company, is the brainchild of [Vershawn Sanders-Ward](#), the institution's founding artistic director and CEO. The touring company is an award-winning ensemble of versatile and dynamic dance "Artivists" that tour and

perform locally, nationally, and internationally. In its sixteen-year history the company has toured and performed in venues such as the Harris Theater for Music & Dance, Dance Center of Columbia College, the DuSable Museum Roundhouse, the Museum of Contemporary Art, ODC Theater, Dance Mission Theater, the Painted Bride, Joyce Soho, and the National Theater of Uganda. Committed to taking their signature idea of “Artivism in Motion” from the stage into learning environments, the company’s community engagement work is a vital part of its creative process and village-building work.

## **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.

Lead support for the 2025–26 season of MCA Performance is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

Generous support is provided by Ginger Farley and Bob Shapiro, Martha Struthers Farley and Donald C. Farley, Jr. Family Foundation, N.A., Trustee; Anne L. Kaplan; and Carol Prins and John Hart/The Jessica Fund.

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. 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](http://mcachicago.org) or at 312.280.2660.



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