

= Museum of Contemporary Art , Chicago =

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago is a contemporary art museum near Water Tower Place in downtown Chicago in Cook County , Illinois , United States . The museum , which was established in 1967 , is one of the world 's largest contemporary art venues . The museum 's collection is composed of thousands of objects of Post - World War II visual art . The museum is run gallery style , with individually curated exhibitions throughout the year . Each exhibition may be composed of temporary loans , pieces from their permanent collection , or a combination of the two .

The museum has hosted several notable debut exhibitions including Frida Kahlo 's first U.S. exhibition and Jeff Koons ' first solo museum exhibition . Koons later presented an exhibit at the Museum that broke the museum 's attendance record . To date , the most attended exhibition has been the 2015 David Bowie Is exhibit , shattering previous records with over 193 ,000 attendees . Its collection , which includes Jasper Johns , Andy Warhol , Cindy Sherman , Kara Walker , and Alexander Calder , contains historical samples of 1940s ? 1970s late surrealism , pop art , minimalism , and conceptual art ; notable holdings 1980s postmodernism ; as well as contemporary painting , sculpture , photography , video , installation , and related media . The museum also presents dance , theater , music , and multidisciplinary arts .

The current location at 220 East Chicago Avenue is in the Streeterville neighborhood of the Near North Side community area . Josef Paul Kleihues designed the current building after the museum conducted a 12 - month search , reviewing more than 200 nominations . The museum opened at its new location June 21 ? 22 , 1996 , with a 24 - hour event that drew more than 25 ,000 visitors . The museum was originally located at 237 East Ontario Street , which was originally designed as a bakery . The current building is known for its signature staircase leading to an elevated ground floor , which has an atrium , the full glass - walled east and west façades giving a direct view of the city and Lake Michigan .

= = History = =

The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago was created as the result of a 1964 meeting of 30 critics , collectors and dealers at the home of critic Doris Lane Butler to bring the long - discussed idea of a museum of contemporary art to complement the city 's Art Institute of Chicago , according to a grand opening story in Time . It opened in fall 1967 in a small space at 237 East Ontario Street that had for a time served as the corporate offices of Playboy Enterprises . Its first director was Jan van der Marck . In 1970 he invited Wolf Vostell to make the Concrete Traffic sculpture in Chicago .

Initially , the museum was conceived primarily as a space for temporary exhibitions , in the German kunsthalle model . However , in 1974 , the museum began acquiring a permanent collection of contemporary art objects created after 1945 . The MCA expanded into adjacent buildings to increase gallery space ; and in 1977 , following a fundraising drive for its 10th anniversary , a three - story neighboring townhouse was purchased , renovated , and connected to the museum . In 1978 , Gordon Matta - Clark executed his final major project in the townhouse . In his work Circus Or The Caribbean Orange (1978) , Matta - Clark made circle cuts in the walls and floors of the townhouse next - door to the first museum .

In 1991 , the museum 's Board of Trustees contributed \$ 37 million (\$ 64 .3 million today) of the expected \$ 55 million (\$ 95 .6 million) construction costs for Chicago 's first new museum building in 65 years . Six of the board members were central to the fundraising as major donors : Jerome Stone (chairman emeritus of Stone Container Corporation) , Beatrice C. Mayer (daughter of Sara Lee Corporation founder Nathan Cummings) and family , Mrs. Edwin Lindy Bergman , the Neison Harris (president of Pittway Corporation) and Irving Harris families , and Thomas and Frances Dittmer (commodities) . The Board of Trustees then weighed architectural proposals from six finalists : Emilio Ambasz of New York ; Tadao Ando of Osaka , Japan ; Josef Paul Kleihues of Berlin ; Fumihiko Maki of Tokyo ; Morphosis of Santa Monica , Calif . ; and Christian de Portzamparc

of Paris . According to Chicago Tribune Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning architecture critic Blair Kamin , the list of contenders was controversial because no Chicago @-@ based architects were included as finalists despite the fact that prominent Chicago architects such as Helmut Jahn and Stanley Tigerman were among the 23 semi @-@ finalists . In fact , none of the finalists had made any prior structures in Chicago . The selection process , which started with 209 contenders , was based on professional qualifications , recent projects , and the ability to work closely with the staff of the aspiring museum .

In 1996 , the MCA opened its current museum at 220 East Chicago Avenue , which was the site of a former National Guard Armory between Lake Michigan and Michigan Avenue from 1907 until it was demolished in 1993 to make way for the MCA . The four @-@ story 220 @,@ 000 @-@ square @-@ foot (20 @,@ 000 m²) building designed by Josef Paul Kleihues , which was five times larger than its predecessor , made the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) Chicago the largest institution devoted to contemporary art in the world . The physical structure is said to reference the modernism of Mies van der Rohe as well as the tradition of Chicago architecture .

= = Operation = =

The museum operates as a tax @-@ exempt non @-@ profit organization , and its exhibitions , programming , and operations are member @-@ supported and privately funded . It has a board of trustees consisting of four officers , 18 life trustees , and more than 40 trustees . The current board chair is King Harris . The museum also has a director , who oversees the MCA 's staff of about 100 . Madeleine Grynsztejn replaced 10 @-@ year director Robert Fitzpatrick during the 2008 fiscal year in this capacity , and she is the MCA 's first female director .

The museum operates with three programming departments : curatorial , performance , and education . Peter Taub is the director of performance programs , Heidi Reitmaier is the Beatrice C. Mayer Director of Education , and Teresa Samala de Guzman is the Chief Operating Officer . The curatorial staff consists of Chief Curator Michael Darling , Curator Naomi Beckwith , Curator Lynne Warren , and Associate Curator Julie Rodrigues Widholm . In 2009 , the museum reported \$ 17 @.@ 5 million in both operating income , 50 % of which came from contributions , and operating expenses . Contributions were received from individuals , corporations , foundations , government entities , and fundraising .

The museum is closed Mondays . While the museum has no mandatory admission charge and operates with a suggested admission (\$ 12 general , \$ 7 students and seniors , free for MCA members , members of the military , and children 12 and under) , it currently provides free admission every Tuesday , when it has extended hours of operation from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. During the summers , the museum provides free outdoor Tuesday Jazz concerts . On the first Friday of most months , the museum hosts First Fridays , which is an event featuring local DJs , artists , and other activities . In addition to art exhibits , the museum offers dance , theater , music , and multidisciplinary arts . The programming includes primary projects and festivals of a broad spectrum of artists presented in performance , discussion , and workshop formats .

= = Exhibitions = =

= = = Past = = =

In its first year of operation , the museum hosted the exhibitions , Pictures To Be Read / Poetry To Be Seen , Claes Oldenburg : Projects for Monuments , and Dan Flavin : Pink and Gold , which was the artist 's first solo show . In 1969 , the museum served as the site of Christo 's first building wrap in the United States . It was wrapped in more than 8 @,@ 000 square feet (700 m²) of tarpaulin and rope . The following year it hosted one @-@ person shows for Roy Lichtenstein , Robert Rauschenberg , and Andy Warhol .

The MCA has also played host to the first American and solo exhibitions of prominent artists such

as Frida Kahlo in 1978 . Other exhibition highlights include the first solo museum shows of Dan Flavin , in 1967 , and Jeff Koons , in 1988 . In 1989 , the MCA hosted Robert Mapplethorpe , The Perfect Moment , a traveling exhibition organized by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia . This exhibition set a record for the highest attendance in the institution 's history . Additional highlights of exhibitions organized or co @-@ organized by the MCA include :

= = = Recent = = =

In 2006 , the MCA was the only American museum to host Bruce Mau 's Massive Change exhibit , which concerned the social , economic , and political effects of design . Additional 2006 exhibitions featured photographers Catherine Opie and Wolfgang Tillmans as well as Chicago @-@ based cartoonist Chris Ware . The 2008 Koons retrospective broke the attendance record with 86 @,@ 584 visitors for the May 31 ? September 21 , 2008 show . This was the culminating exhibit of the 2008 fiscal year , which celebrated the 40th anniversary of the museum .

In 2009 , the MCA presented Jeremy Deller 's exhibition It Is What It Is : Conversations About Iraq . The exhibition was organized by the New Museum , and it was a new commission by the New Museum , New York ; the Museum of Contemporary Art , Chicago ; and the Hammer Museum , Los Angeles .

Co @-@ organized by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Wexner Center for the Arts , the MCA presented Luc Tuymans from October 2010 ? January 2011 . Susan Philipsz : We Shall Be All was presented at the MCA February ? June , 2011 . The Turner Prize @-@ winning artist 's sound exhibition featured protest songs and drew from Chicago 's labor history . The exhibition Eiko & Koma : Time is Not Even , Space is Not Empty is the first series of stage performances and a gallery exhibition presented at the MCA . The Japanese @-@ born choreographers and dance artists perform and exhibit at the MCA June ? November , 2011 .

= = = Recurring programs = = =

After a 10 @-@ year run , the exhibition series UBS 12x12 : New Artists / New Work is moving from the second floor to the third floor , into a larger gallery space and will change its name to " Chicago Works . " The exhibition series will still feature Chicago @-@ area artists . Rather than each artist being displayed for one month , each exhibition in the series will now be displayed for three months .

Starting in 2002 , the MCA began commissioning artists and architects to design and construct public art for the front plaza . The goal of the program is to link the museum to its neighboring community by extending its programmatic , educational , and outreach functions . While artists have been exhibited intermittently on the MCA plaza since 2002 , the summer 2011 plaza exhibit showcasing four works by Miami @-@ based sculptor Mark Handforth marks a revitalization of the plaza project .

From October through May , the MCA hosts monthly Family Days , which feature artistic activities for all ages . Each summer , the museum hosts Tuesdays on the Terrace , a jazz performance series ; Summer Studios , designed for families to experience the creative process ; and a Farmers Market on the MCA plaza on Tuesdays from June through October .

= = Performance = =

In 2011 , the MCA celebrated its 15th anniversary of the MCA Stage . The MCA Stage has featured local , national , and international theater , dance , music , multimedia , and film performances in its 15 @-@ year history . It is known as the " most active interdisciplinary arts presenter in Chicago " and partners with local community organizations for the co @-@ presentations of performing arts .

Notable past stage appearances include performances by Trisha Brown Dance Company , Abbey Theatre of Ireland , Olafur Arnalds , and Elevator Repair Service .

= = New structure = =

The new five @-@ storey limestone and cast @-@ aluminum structure was designed by Berlin architect Josef Paul Kleihues . The building , which opened in 1996 , contains 45 @,@ 000 square feet (4 @,@ 200 m²) of gallery space (seven times the space of the old museum) , a theater , studio @-@ classrooms , an education center , a museum store , a restaurant @-@ café , and a sculpture garden . The MCA building was Kleihues 's first American structure . Its construction cost US \$ 46 @.@ 5 million (\$ 70 @.@ 2 million today) . The sculpture garden , which is 34 @,@ 000 square feet (3 @,@ 200 m²) , includes a sculptural installation by Sol LeWitt and sculptures by George Rickey and Jane Highstein . The floor plan of both the building and the sculpture garden is a square , on which the proportions of the building is based .

The building 's main entrance , which is accessed by scaling 32 steps , uses both symmetry and transparency as themes for its large central glass walls that compose the majority of both the east and west façades of the building . Two additional entrances ? into the education center and into the museum store ? are located on either side of the main staircase . The monumental staircase with projecting bays and plinths that may be used as the base for sculpture is reminiscent of the propyleia of the Acropolis in Athens . The main level entry hall has an adjacent 55 @-@ foot (16 @.@ 8 m) atrium that connects it to a restaurant in the rear of the building . Two galleries for temporary exhibitions flank the atrium . The stairwell in the northwest corner is often cited as the buildings most interesting and dynamic artistic feature . The elevated views of Lake Michigan are considered to be a rewarding feature of the building . The building 's 56 @-@ foot (17 @.@ 1 m) glass facade sits atop 16 feet (4 @.@ 9 m) of Indiana limestone . The building is known for its hand @-@ cast aluminum panels adjoined to the facade with stainless steel buttons . The building has two two @-@ story gallery spaces and a smaller one @-@ story gallery space on the second floor . The third floor has a gallery and exhibition space in its northwest section , and the fourth floor has two large galleries , an exhibition space on the west side of the building , and a gallery in the southwest section .

The museum has a 296 @-@ seat multi @-@ use theater with a proscenium @-@ layout stage . The seats are laid out in 14 rows with two side aisles . The stage is 52 by 34 feet (16 m × 10 m) and elevated 36 inches (0 @.@ 91 m) above the floor level of the first row of seats . The house has a 12 degree incline . The stage has three curtains and four catwalks .

= = = Critical review = = =

Complaining that the structure has a more fortress @-@ like exterior than its predecessor , Kamin viewed the architectural attempt as a fumbled work . However , he considered the interior to be serene and contemplative in a manner that complements the contemporary art and compact and organized in a manner that is an improvement on the more traditional mazelike museums . Comparing the building to the Sullivan Center and the Art Institute of Chicago Building , Kamin describes the museum as an homage to two of Chicago 's architectural influences : Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Louis Sullivan . Other critics also note the presence of Mies van der Rohe 's spirit in the architecture .

Chicago @-@ based architect Douglas Garofalo has described the building as stark , intimidating and " incongruous with contemporary sensibilities " . The interior atrium , which the architect claims links the city to the lake is part of a transcendent space that benefits from the sunlight that enters through the high glass walls . The building is said to be designed to separate the art from other distracting services and functions of the venue . Kamin was also pleased with the separate entrances on the main floor for the museum store and accessibility entrances .

= = New Vision = =

Announced by the Chicago Tribune in June 2011 , the MCA is in the process of reinventing its identity with new curators , a new floor plan , and a new vision . MCA Director Madeleine Grynsztejn

says the museum seeks to be 50 / 50 artist @-@ activated / audience @-@ engaged . The main floor 's north and south galleries will present exhibitions showcasing the museum 's permanent collection and work by post @-@ emerging contemporary artists . The third floor will be for the " Chicago Works " series . The fourth floor will have gallery spaces for the MCA Screen and MCA DNA series , while the main barrel @-@ vaulted galleries will be for special exhibitions .

= = Collection = =

The museum 's collection consists of about 2 @,@ 700 objects , as well as more than 3 @,@ 000 artist 's books . The collection includes works of art from 1945 to the present .

Former MCA Chief Curator Elizabeth Smith provided a narrative of the museum 's collection . She says the collection has examples of late surrealism , pop art , minimalism , and conceptual art from the 1940s through the 1970s ; work from the 1980s that can be grouped under postmodernism ; and painting , sculpture , photography , video , installation , and related media current artists explore .

= = = Notable Works = = =

Study for a Portrait , 1949 , by Francis Bacon

Les merveilles de la nature (The Wonders of Nature) , 1953 , René Magritte

Polychrome and Horizontal Bluebird , 1954 , by Alexander Calder

In Memory of My Feelings - Frank O 'Hara , 1961 , by Jasper Johns

Retroactive II , 1963 , by Robert Rauschenberg

Jackie Frieze , 1964 , by Andy Warhol

Untitled , 1970 , Donald Judd

Untitled Film Still , # 14 , 1978 , by Cindy Sherman

Rabbit , 1986 , by Jeff Koons

Cindy , 1988 , by Chuck Close

Presenting Negro Scenes Drawn Upon My Passage through the South and Reconfigured for the Benefit of Enlightened Audiences Wherever Such May Be Found , By Myself , Missus K.E.B. Walker , Colored , 1997 , by Kara Walker

During the 2008 fiscal year the MCA celebrated its 40th anniversary , which inspired gifts of works by artists such as Dan Flavin , Alfredo Jaar , and Thomas Ruff . Additionally , the museum expanded its collection by acquiring the work of some of the artists it presented during its anniversary celebration such as Carlos Amorales , Tony Oursler , and Adam Pendleton .