

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 2015

# Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago News

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## JOHNSTON MARKLEE: GRID IS A GRID IS A GRID IS A GRID IS A GRID

October 3, 2015 – January 3, 2016



The **Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago** presents an installation in the MCA Café by the Los Angeles-based architecture firm **Johnston Marklee**. Led by principals Sharon Johnston and Mark Lee, the firm—who have been hired by the MCA to create a master plan for the museum that includes a redesign and relocation of the restaurant, a new visitor engagement space, as well as changes to other spaces—have designed this intervention to coincide with the inaugural **Chicago Architecture Biennial**. The immersive and experiential design references both the predominant grid devised by the building's original architect, Josef Paul Kleihues, and their own proposed renovations to come. The exhibition is on view from October 3 through January 3, 2016 and is curated by MCA Chief Curator Michael Darling.

For their MCA installation, Johnston Marklee applies a 2 x 2 square graphic on the café walls, as well as a gridded ceiling structure of aluminum box beams that cuts the double height space in half. This new

overhead volume alludes to one aspect of the Johnston Marklee's proposed redesign of the building, where a mezzanine level could create rooms for art making and gathering above and to activate the current café as a social engagement space below.

While the three-dimensional grid overhead conveys a more intimate scale that may be part of the museum's future, the graphic applied to the walls reveals the grid logic embedded in the existing architecture, and at the same time exposes the limitations and challenges that such rigorous geometries present.

**Sharon Johnston** and **Mark Lee** are long-time collaborators and received the A.I.A. Emerging Practice Award, Los Angeles Chapter, in 2013. Their clients include art and cultural institutions, commercial developers, and private clients such as the Hammer Museum, Harvard University, University of California, and the Menil Foundation. They are active participants within the architectural education community—both are on faculty in the Department of Architecture and Urban Design at the University of California, Los Angeles, and they teach at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and exhibit and lecture internationally. They are currently in the master plan phase of the MCA project that will inform the construction of the new restaurant and educational facilities—set to open in 2017.

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Image: MCA Café Concept Proposal by Johnston Marklee for the Chicago Architecture Biennial. Rendering by Tom Hancocks.

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. 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, including the Illinois Arts Council, a state agency, and the City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events. 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, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm and Tuesday from 10 am to 8 pm. The museum is closed on Monday. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. Suggested general admission is \$12 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Children 12 years of age and under, MCA members, and members of the military are admitted free. Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at [mcachicago.org](http://mcachicago.org) or by phone at 312.280.2660.