

## OUR PUBLIC REACTS

This exhibition celebrates the MCA's history of presenting trail-blazing artists, an ambition that was central to the museum's founding mission of emphasizing innovation and experimentation.

Audiences were eager to experience the new radical art but were also often baffled by it. After viewing Dan Flavin's installation of fluorescent lights, *Pink and "Gold"* (1967), some visitors asked to be refunded the 50¢ admission fee. But many were intrigued, as is reflected in the televised and print news of the day. Because of the extensive press coverage, audiences flocked to see Chris Burden's legendary 1975 performance *Doomed*, as it unfolded over 45 hours.

Viewers were often invited to actively participate in MCA exhibitions and programs, as can be seen in two documentaries from 1969: *Options*, in which patrons interact with artworks, and a WTTW television program that shows students exploring artworks featured in the group exhibition *Art by Telephone*.

Excerpts from artist interviews produced by  
the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Total running time: 21 minutes, 12 seconds

Featuring:

Luc Tuymans (Belgian, b. 1958) on the  
occasion of *Luc Tuymans*, 2010

Amanda Ross-Ho (American, b. 1975)  
on the occasion of *THE CHARACTER  
AND SHAPE OF ILLUMINATED THINGS*  
Plaza Project, 2013

Amalia Pica (Argentinean, b. 1978) on  
the occasion of *Amalia Pica*, 2013

Richard Hunt (American, b. 1935) on the  
occasion of *MCA DNA: Richard Hunt*, 2014

Kerry James Marshall (American, b. 1955)  
on the occasion of *Kerry James Marshall:  
Mastery*, 2016

Public Service Announcements for the  
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago,  
including:

“Boogie Woogie,” 1985

“15th Anniversary,” 1982

“Animation,” 1982

Untitled, 1981

U-matic transferred to video (color, sound)  
Total running time: 3 minutes, 14 seconds

Excerpts from artist interviews produced by  
the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Total running time: 33 minutes, 30 seconds

Featuring:

Vito Acconci (American, 1940–2017)  
on the occasion of *Vito Acconci:  
A Retrospective 1969–1980*, 1980

Ed Paschke (American, 1939–2004) on  
the occasion of *11 Chicago Artists*, 1982

Nam June Paik (American, b. Korea,  
1932–2006) and Charlotte Moorman  
(American, 1933–1991) on the occasion  
of *Nam June Paik*, 1982

Magdalena Abakanowicz (Polish,  
1930–2017) on the occasion of  
*Magdalena Abakanowicz*, 1982

Jeff Koons (American, b. 1955) on  
the occasion of *Jeff Koons: Works  
1979–1988*, 1988

Lorna Simpson (American, b. 1960)  
on the occasion of *Lorna Simpson:  
For the Sake of the Viewer*, 1992

Fred Wilson (American, b. 1954) on the  
occasion of *OpEd: Fred Wilson*, 1994

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the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

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Installation views of Dan Flavin's  
*Pink and "Gold,"* 1967-68  
35 mm color slides

These archival slides document Dan Flavin's (American, 1933-1996) first solo museum show, *Pink and "Gold."* The exhibition consisted of a single large-scale installation of 54 pink and yellow fluorescent lights.

Although Flavin would become one of the best-known and influential artists of his generation, initially his minimalist presentation and use of fluorescent lights were off-putting to many viewers. Visitors expressed their frustration and confusion on comment cards.

The MCA produced a pioneering print-on-demand catalogue to accompany the exhibition, with the intention of including the visitor comments, though they were ultimately not incorporated.

“Contemporary Art: Art by Telephone,” 1970  
Television broadcast coproduced by  
WTTW and the Museum of Contemporary  
Art Chicago  
16 mm film transferred to video (black and  
white, sound)  
30 minutes  
Gift of David H. Katzive

*Art by Telephone* (1969) was a groundbreaking conceptual exhibition: artists called in instructions for making artworks, and MCA staff executed the works. After the exhibition closed, MCA staff transferred selected projects to the WTTW studios for the filming of this program.

While looking at the works, the MCA’s first director, Jan van der Marck, and first curator, David H. Katzive, discuss contemporary art with Chicago Public School students. The students from Von Steuben and Harlan High Schools grapple with concepts about art in ways that are still relevant today.

David H. Katzive  
(American, b. 1942)

Documentation of exhibitions and  
programming at the Museum of  
Contemporary Art Chicago, 1967–70  
16 mm film transferred to video  
(color, silent)  
33 minutes

Integrating visual and performing arts has always been an essential element of the MCA's innovative and multifaceted approach. The museum's first curator, David H. Katzive, filmed the MCA's earliest activities, capturing the spirit of a young, experimental museum.

Katzive documented high-profile exhibitions like the 1970 Andy Warhol retrospective and lesser-known but equally fascinating shows like the psychedelic *Baron & Bailey Light Circus* (1968). In an extended segment dedicated to *Art by Telephone* (1969), Katzive films himself and other staff creating works for the exhibition according to instructions provided by the artists. The film also highlights a performance by Meredith Monk staged in the Beverly Pepper exhibition (1969), and a 1970 "street experience" by Taller de Montevideo.



David H. Katzive  
(American, b. 1942)

*Christo: Wrap In, Wrap Out*, 1969

16 mm film transferred to video

(black and white, sound)

3 minutes, 51 seconds

The MCA's first curator, David H. Katzive, filmed the first three years of exhibitions and programming. From that footage, he created short films about two of the museum's most provocative exhibitions. These films and *Options* by Jerry Aronson and Howard Sturges were commercially distributed.

*Christo: Wrap In, Wrap Out* shows Christo (American, b. Bulgaria, 1935) and crew wrangling tarps and ropes as they wrap the exterior of the MCA's original building located at 237 East Ontario Street. The museum was the first building in the United States wrapped by the artist and his wife and artistic collaborator, Jeanne-Claude (American, b. France, 1935–2009). Mummifying objects in this way thwarts their intended purpose, here questioning the very idea of a modern museum. By wrapping the MCA, the artist sparked controversy: some viewers were delighted, others were perplexed, and the Chicago Fire Department, concerned that the wrap was a fire hazard, threatened to shut down the exhibition.

*Wolf Vostell's Concrete Traffic, 1970*

16 mm film transferred to video (color, sound)

4 minutes, 41 seconds

In *Wolf Vostell's Concrete Traffic*, Katzive depicts another mummification. The MCA commissioned Wolf Vostell (German, 1932–1998) to conceive an “event sculpture.” Vostell instructed MCA staff to acquire a Cadillac and encase it in concrete, transforming a mobile car into a stationary monument, *Concrete Traffic* (1970). Set to a “soundtrack” of car commercials and weather reports, the film shows staff making and unveiling the sculpture in a parking lot at the corner of Ontario and St. Clair Streets.

Later that year, Vostell and the MCA donated the sculpture to the University of Chicago. The university recently completed a four-year effort to conserve the sculpture, which is currently on view in the Campus North Parking Garage.

*Art by Telephone* (exhibition catalogue), 1969  
33  $\frac{1}{3}$  RPM LP

The pioneering exhibition *Art by Telephone* (1969) was accompanied by an equally cutting-edge catalogue. Artists called in instructions for creating artworks, which MCA staff followed to make the works. Curator David H. Katzive recorded the calls on  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch reel-to-reel tape. The edited recordings were compiled and released as the exhibition catalogue.

Jerry Aronson  
(American, b. 1945)

Howard Sturges  
(American, b. 1946)

*Options*, 1969

16 mm film transferred to video

(color, sound)

6 minutes, 42 seconds

*Options* broke the cardinal rule of museums: don't touch the art. It was a group exhibition of "optional art"—art designed to offer choices to the audience, inviting viewers to intellectually and physically interact with the art. Filmmakers and students at Illinois Institute of Technology, Jerry Aronson and Howard Sturges aimed to replicate the spirit of the exhibition in this experimental film. Their unconventional filmmaking approach provoked and captured visitors' reactions to the art and allowed the film's audience to share in the participatory experience.

*Art by Telephone* (exhibition catalogue), 1969  
33  $\frac{1}{3}$  RPM LP transferred to digital file  
53 minutes, 28 seconds

The pioneering exhibition *Art by Telephone* (1969) was accompanied by an equally cutting-edge catalogue. Artists called in instructions for creating artworks, which MCA staff followed to make the works. Curator David H. Katzive recorded the calls on  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch reel-to-reel tape. The edited recordings were compiled and released as the exhibition catalogue.

Dennis O'Shea  
(American, b. 1950)

Documentation of Chris Burden's *Doomed*, 1975  
U-matic video transferred to video (black and  
white, sound)  
45 minutes, 10 seconds

On view for the first time, this video documents the legendary performance *Doomed* (1975) by Chris Burden (American, 1946–2015), in which the artist lay in the gallery for 45 hours without food, water, or communication. *Doomed* was part of *Bodyworks*, an exhibition focused on artists using their bodies as their means of expression.

Burden only disclosed the required components for the work: Burden himself, a wall clock, and a pane of glass angled against the wall. On Friday, April 11, at 8 pm, he positioned himself behind the glass, starting the performance. More than 400 people attended that night. Some anticipated a violent spectacle, they yelled and threw objects at the glass, exacerbating the tension. As the museum's closing time approached, Burden gave no indication of stopping. Staff chose not to interfere and kept the museum open. This commitment to the artist's vision would test both the museum's and Burden's limits.

On Saturday, staff member Dennis O'Shea rented a video camera and began recording the performance. O'Shea recalls, "No one knew what it was exactly, but that lack of clarity was . . . a part of what made Burden's piece so exciting." The uncertainty continued to attract crowds and media attention, inspiring columns by Mike Royko and Roger Ebert.

Staff grew concerned for Burden and, after consulting with physicians, decided to intervene. At 5:20 pm on Sunday, O'Shea put a carafe of water within Burden's reach, ending the piece. Only then did Burden reveal that the performance would end when someone disrupted his physical space or the museum closed.

Visitor comment cards from  
*Dan Flavin: Pink and "Gold," 1967-68*

*Dan Flavin: Pink and "Gold," 1967-68,*  
exhibition catalogue



Installation view of Claes Oldenburg,  
*Frayed Wire*, 1969, and Christo, *Wrapped  
Museum of Contemporary Art*, 1969

Source material for Claes Oldenburg,  
*Frayed Wire*, 1969

Installation view of Claes Oldenburg,  
*Pop Tart*, 1967; Photo, 1969.

Source material for Claes Oldenburg,  
*Pop Tart*, 1967

WTTW Press Release, *Art by Telephone*, 1970

Installation view of William Wegman,  
*Third Day*, 1969

William Wegman (American, b. 1943)

Sketch of *Third Day*, 1969

Ink on paper

Letter from Siah Armajani to David Katzive,  
October 12, 1969



MCA Press Release, *Stolen Oriental Rug*, 1969

Installation view of Richard Artschwager's  
*Stolen Oriental Rug*, 1969

Harold Haydon, "Art By Phone?  
Somebody Dialed the Wrong Number,"  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, November 9, 1969

“Wrapture of Creation Wins Firemen’s Ok”

Roger Ebert, "Body Artist Moves His  
Audience—Right Out the Door,"  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, April 13, 1975

“Package Shows Can Be Big Deal for Artists and Contractors,” *Elgin Daily Courier-News*, February 3, 1969

"Artful Wraps Facing Fire Ire,"  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, January 15, 1969

Letter from Christo to Jan van der Marck,  
November 13, 1968



Tarp samples from Christo, *Wrapped*  
*Museum of Contemporary Art, 1968-69*

"Pass the Word: Art by Phone,"  
*Newslines*, November 17, 1969

Harold Haydon, "Some Take Dim View of  
Lights," *Chicago Sun-Times*, December 24, 1967

*Edison Service News, January-February 1968*

Postcard from Dan Flavin to Jan van der Marck,  
October 15, 1967

Roger Ebert, "The Danger Man of Art,"  
*Chicago Sun-Times*, May 25, 1975

Mike Royko, "Fluid Side of Modern Art,"  
*Chicago Daily News*, April 15, 1975

"Art by Ordeal," *Chicago Daily News*