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McCormick Place West Unveils 50 Works of Public Art by Local Artists

MPEA now houses one of Illinois' largest public art collections

CHICAGO – Members of the convention and tourism industry, along with members of the arts, culture and education communities, joined officials of the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) today as they unveiled 50 works of public art in the new, award-winning McCormick Place West Building. The collection showcases the talents of 30 homegrown artists who were commissioned by the Authority to interpret Chicago's rich cultural and artistic history in a way that engages visitors to the convention facility.

MPEA, owner and operator of McCormick Place, North America's largest convention center, first commissioned the artwork for McCormick West in 2005. Today, after three years of commissioning, designing and installing the collection, the artwork was showcased at an event with more than 100 attendees from across the metropolitan area, as well as art patrons from throughout the country.

"This public art collection is a wonderful addition to McCormick West and with more than 90 events booked, this state-of-the-art facility has proved to be a wonderful new economic engine for the state," said Theodore R. Tetzlaff, Chairman of the MPEA. "McCormick Place is proud to play a role in adding to and enhancing Chicago's already vibrant art culture."

"Public art is an important element to a culturally rich urban environment," said Juan A. Ochoa, Chief Executive Officer of the MPEA. "We want to show the residents of our neighboring community, citizens across the city and state and visitors from around the world that McCormick West is a place for everyone to enjoy. "

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McCormick West's public art collection was designed with the goal of engaging and enhancing the viewer's experience within the award-winning architecture of this convention facility. Each work selected is unique in its medium, size and scope. The collection also showcases the talents of Illinois' and Chicago's homegrown artists, while conveying and sharing the state's regional history with local, national and international visitors.

Consultant and local art advocate, Paul Klein, oversaw the project. It was his vision to focus on themes native to the city and state.

"Through my work with McCormick Place, I realized that our meeting and convention facilities are often the first and last taste of Chicago a visitor may experience," said Klein. "Working with the MPEA and these very talented artists, I wanted to assemble a collection that communicates to visitors the energy, diversity and rich history that is inherent to Chicago and Illinois. This collection accomplishes that - and on a scale that will impress any passerby."

Some examples of the artwork and how it communicates Chicago and Illinois' regional history:

In the piece *With Love and Frank* by Art Institute Chicago professor Diana Guerrero-Maciá, the artist samples pieces of cloth to make a virtual quilt displaying the ever-famous Chicago-praising lyrics of Frank Sinatra, "My Kind of Town."

Artist and Art Institute of Chicago teacher Preston Jackson, who participated in the event's speaking program, highlights the nearby Bronzeville neighborhood during the 1940s and 50s in his piece, *Bronzeville, a Moment in Metal*.

"The piece captures the mood of everyday life in the Bronzeville neighborhood at an important time in Chicago's history. This area, just south of McCormick Place, was - and continues to be - home to numerous African Americans, who moved from the South during the Great Migration in the early 20th Century," said Jackson.

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Dan Ramirez, another artist who is also a teacher from the Art Institute of Chicago and who spoke at today's program, has a total of eight paintings throughout McCormick West's Central Concourse. His works are inspired by Nelson Algren's 1951 essay, *Chicago: City on the Make*. Each painting is named for a different passage of the essay.

The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA) is the owner of one of the largest public art collections in Illinois. In addition to the 50 new art pieces in the McCormick West, there are another 70 works of art in the McCormick Place South Building. Highlights include a glass chandelier by world-renowned artist Dale Chihuly. Navy Pier, also owned and operated by the MPEA, is home to the *Smith Museum of Stained Glass Windows* - the largest collection of these beautifully crafted windows.

MPEA's comprehensive art collection is open to the public year-round, subject to facility and tradeshow schedules. For more information, contact the MPEA Corporate Communications Department at 312-791-6121.

ABOUT McCORMICK PLACE WEST: The state-of-the-art McCormick Place West Building officially opened on August 2, 2007 and was designed to offer greater flexibility and functionality in order to meet the changing needs of customers well into the future. This newest building on the McCormick Place convention campus enables MPEA to host more simultaneous and back-to-back shows. McCormick West is also the largest new-construction facility in the country to receive the coveted LEED®-certification from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building adds another 470,000 square feet of exhibit space to McCormick Place's existing 2.2 million square feet. It also adds 250,000 square feet of meeting space and features 61 meeting rooms, one of the world's largest and most elegant ballrooms, plus a beautiful Rooftop Garden, which offers stunning views of the city.

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