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MCA Denver creates new platform for artist experimentation and creative partnerships, expanding community reach with long-term lease at Northside’s historic Holiday Theater

Denver, CO - The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) today announced a landmark arrangement with the newly formed Denver Cultural Property Trust that will ensure that the city’s creative community has a long-term hub for the arts at the historic Holiday Theater in the Northside neighborhood, a space where MCA Denver has held some of its dynamic off-site programming, such as Mixed Taste, over the last six years. Through a seven-year lease of the space, with the option to renew for two terms, MCA Denver will greatly advance the museum’s mission and generate new opportunities for its innovative, community and artist-driven programming and creative partnerships.

“MCA Denver advocates for the artists in our region to ensure that creative life, and those who make the city so vibrant, can continue to thrive. Advancing our mission to celebrate and scrutinize the field of contemporary art, while also providing a platform for creative expression within a treasured, storied theater in a vibrant neighborhood rich with history is an absolute dream,” said Nora Burnett Abrams, MCA Denver Mark G. Falcone Director. “We greatly look forward to working with the Northside community to honor the incredible history of this space and neighborhood through thoughtful and creative, site-responsive programming that builds upon MCA Denver’s long history of experimentation and innovation.”

MCA Denver’s leasing of the Holiday Theater is the first initiative of a new Denver Cultural Property Trust, established by Continuum Partners’ CEO and MCA Denver Emeritus Board Member, Mark Falcone, with the mission to preserve important commercial spaces and residences on a long-term, affordable basis for artists and creative practitioners in the community. The Trust’s first purchase was the Holiday Theater, and its unique ownership structure allows buildings purchased at market price to be leased to the city’s creative workforces and the organizations that support them at below-market rents. The Trust is in the process of establishing its not-for-profit status and will be led by a board of directors.

MCA Denver will take occupancy of the Holiday Theater in December 2021 and aims to begin programming by spring. Its activation of the building will be guided by several core principles:

- **To be a beacon of creativity** for artists and the surrounding community through artist residencies, public art projects, and artist-led programming collaborations
- **To be a trusted partner** to artists and community members by co-creating opportunities for students at neighboring high schools and colleges, providing a home for small arts-based non-profits, and forming long-term partnerships with performing arts organizations
- **To be an incubator** for creative practice by offering rehearsal and performance spaces and providing professional services and career development opportunities to artists

During its first year at the theater, MCA Denver will present a robust schedule of museum-driven and collaborative programming conceived in partnership with cultural and community-based organizations from across the Denver-metro area. Reflecting the dynamism of Denver's creative community, the theater will host events such as performances by local musicians, curated film series, lectures, artist conversations, workshops, and residencies that culminate in the creation of new work.

"We are so excited to begin welcoming visitors into the space early next year," continued Arbams. "As we anticipate that opening, we are committed to working closely with North High School faculty and students to collaborate on teen arts programming for 2022, to forming an advisory cabinet this fall with community stakeholders, artists, and North High School representatives to ensure we have continued lines of communication for input and feedback from Northside neighbors, and to forming partnerships with creative individuals and organizations in Denver so that we come out of the gate next spring with a strong, diverse lineup of programmatic offerings representing a spectrum of creativity."

"At our core, we're a museum that embraces creative experimentation and community outreach. And for more than 10 years, we've been expanding our networks to include students, local artists and cultural partners throughout Denver. Moving into the Holiday Theater is a major milestone on that journey and will ensure that we continue to connect with new audiences, work with even more artists and create even more dynamic and thought-provoking programming year-round," said Mike Fries, MCA Denver Board Chair.

"Urban development in the United States over the last two decades has been a proverbial Tale of Two Cities. After decades of decline, investment into center city neighborhoods grew dramatically after 2000. The last decade, in particular, has seen an unprecedented rush of investors dislocating middle-income citizens, small businesses, creatives and cultural institutions that are an essential part of the urban ecosystem," said Mark Falcone, founder and CEO of Continuum Partners LLC and the Denver Cultural Property Trust. "We formed the Trust to create a new tool to help protect the businesses and residents we value so highly, and to ensure the long term prosperity for our cultural and artistic communities."

“This is an exciting initiative for the Northside and for Denver. MCA Denver is known for experimentation and deep ties in the creative communities of the city. I am eager to see how they program the space and work within our community to showcase local artists,” said Denver District 1 Councilwoman Amanda Sandoval. “What’s more, the vehicle for how MCA Denver will be leasing the theatre - the Trust - is a truly visionary and unique solution to ensuring that artists and cultural organizations can maintain a civic and community presence amidst widespread gentrification.”

Located at 2644 W 32nd Street in Denver’s Northside, the Holiday Theater was built in 1914, and was named the Egyptian Theater in 1926. It was renamed the Holiday in 1953. It was the first theater in Colorado to present Spanish language films, which were featured there from the 1960s through the 1980s. It has held a variety of other uses over the last 107 years, including as a church, and occasional location for MCA Denver’s artists’ talks and other creative programming since 2015.

“There is immense potential to work with partners from all over the Denver metro area to create one-of-kind creative projects. With the Holiday Theater, we can experiment and imagine in ways that we currently can’t do in our building, and it will allow us to live as a more decentralized, networked museum - engaging with artists and audiences in new, different and meaningful ways,” said Sarah Kate Baie, Director of Programming at MCA Denver.

In consultation with MCA Denver, the Trust will manage leasing the spaces below the theater as artist studios. The Trust will also manage the 11 apartments above the theater, which are currently all occupied. As tenants choose to move on and units become available, these apartments will be offered to artists at below-market rates.

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Current + Upcoming Exhibitions

Jason Moran: Bathing the Room with Blues - September 10, 2021-January 30, 2022

Deborah Roberts: I'm - September 10, 2021-January 30, 2022

About MCA Denver

The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver (MCA Denver) explores the art and culture of our time through rotating exhibitions and public educational programs. Featuring international, national, and regional artists, MCA Denver offers a wide range of exhibitions promoting creative experimentation with art and ideas. Through adult and youth education programs and other creative events, the museum serves as an innovative forum for a culturally engaged community.

About the Denver Cultural Property Trust

The Denver Cultural Property Trust was founded by Mark Falcone, CEO and founder of Continuum Partner to develop more equitable housing solutions for the local cultural community. The Denver Cultural Property Trust was established as a not-for-profit to invest in strategically located residences and enterprise spaces and ensure affordable, long-term rent stable opportunities for the city's creative workforces and the organizations that support them. The Trust is designed to purchase key properties in order to steward them on an affordable, rent-stable basis in perpetuity.

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