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Billiken by Wills Glasspiegel and Brandon K. Calhoun

***Art on theMART* Announces 2022 Summer Programming with Bud Billiken Parade-Themed Projection and a New Commission that Activates theMART's Architecture**

Award-winning Chicago filmmaker Wills Glasspiegel Returns to theMART for a New Large-scale Projection in Collaboration with Chicago Youth Dance Troupe Leader Shkunna Stewart that Spotlights the South Side's Bud Billiken Parade, the Largest African-American Parade in the U.S., as it Celebrates its 93rd Year

Art on theMART's 2022 Summer Programming will also Feature New Work by German Artist Jonas Denzel that Activates the Architecture of theMART, with Continued Showings of a Newly Commissioned Piece by Nick Cave Tied to his Retrospective at MCA Chicago

CHICAGO – As the “Year of Chicago Dance” designated by the City of Chicago reaches its halfway point, *Art on theMART* continues to spotlight local dancers, choreographers and visual artists on the most prominent public art canvas in the city while also featuring international artists. This summer's lineup includes ***Billiken***, an all-new projection directed by fourth generation youth dance troupe leader **Shkunna Stewart** and Time Out Best in the City Award-winner **Wills Glasspiegel**. Bridging local and international arts communities, summer 2022 will also see ***explore***, a work by international artist **Jonas Denzel**, recognized for his stunning and

creative projection mapping presentations in his native Germany. The two new pieces will debut on Thursday, June 30 and will play twice nightly at 9 p.m. through September 7, 2022 alongside Nick Cave's *Ba Boom Boom Pa Pop Pop* in the 9:30 p.m. slot.

Wills Glasspiegel, the filmmaker behind *Art on theMART's* 2021 *Footnotes* projection that won Time Out Chicago's Best in The City Award for the category of public artwork, has partnered with dance group leader Shkunna Stewart to direct *Billiken*: a large-scale work composed of video footage and animated imagery that celebrates the talented youth dance groups and marching bands that participate and compete in Chicago's annual Bud Billiken Parade, the largest and longest-running African American parade in the U.S. Spearheaded by the *Chicago Defender* newspaper in 1929, generations of south-side Chicagoans have participated in the event throughout the decades. Shkunna Stewart, co-director of *Billiken*, is the fourth generation of her family to lead dancers at the parade, having won broad acclaim after taking first place in the parade's dance competition on several occasions with her dance group Bringing Out Talent, featured in the projection alongside over 100 local dancers including the much-admired South Shore Drill Team. *Billiken* is co-produced by the Chicago Defender Charities.

"Most people don't understand the work that we do as dance presidents, CEOs and organizers. We save lives through dance," said Shkunna Stewart. "We give youth a place to be themselves, to build confidence and joy. *Billiken* shows that. It gives our kids something different and positive to focus on. Many of these dancers featured in *Billiken* have never been to the Riverwalk. They don't know how beautiful our city is. This project is building bridges and broadening perspectives on all sides."

"Our new work for *Art on theMART*, titled *Billiken*, channels the long history of Chicago's Bud Billiken Parade," said Wills Glasspiegel. "Our work celebrates and extends the parade's history from the south side to theMART downtown, inviting youth dancers and dance companies to shine at a scale that befits their brilliance."

Additional collaborators for *Billiken* include DJ RP Boo, a legendary trailblazer in Chicago's house music and footwork dance scenes. RP Boo was among the first DJs to spin live at Bud Billiken in the '90s, helping craft a musical tradition that continues at the parade today. RP Boo has assembled a house music soundtrack to accompany *Billiken*, punctuated with samples from Rich Township Marching Machine, a youth marching band from Rich Township High School in the south suburbs. Also involved in the project is Brandon K. Calhoun, reprising his role as animator after his and Glasspiegel's *Art on theMART* smash hit *Footnotes*.

Jonas Denzel's piece, titled *explore*, features a barrage of hands discovering the architecture of theMART's façade. Inspired by drums, Denzel's work is often interactive and rhythmically adept, created in reference to the surrounding environment – not just visually but also in terms of sound. For his *Art on theMART* commission, hands will knock, rub, clap and perform a rhythm-choreography across one of Chicago's most iconic buildings, encouraging members of the public to join in. The work, in turn, transforms the building itself into a towering musical instrument. Denzel is a veteran in the field of projection mapping as public art, having presented his work in various venues around the world.

"*Art on theMART* is excited to welcome back Chicagoans and visitors to the downtown area for this jubilant, energetic summer program," said Cynthia Noble, executive director of *Art on theMART*. "We look forward to amplifying the local talent behind the historic Bud Billiken Parade for the world, while also bringing the work of international artists to Chicago."

For more information on *Art on theMART* and summer programming, please visit: www.artonthemart.com.

About *Art on theMART*

Art on theMART is the largest permanent digital art projection in the world, projecting contemporary artwork across the 2.5-acre river-façade of theMART. This expansive permanent public art platform continues Chicago's legacy of providing both residents and visitors with exceptional art that is both free and accessible to all. Projections are visible to the public from Wacker Drive and along the Chicago Riverwalk.

The program content rotates seasonally and is selected with the assistance and expertise of the Curatorial Advisory Board. The City of Chicago and theMART work in partnership to manage and curate the projected artwork over the course of a 30-year agreement. Privately funded by Vornado Realty Trust, owner of theMART, *Art on theMART* marks the first time a projection of its size and scope is completely dedicated to digital art with no branding, sponsorship credits or messaging. The permanent projection system illuminates theMART with 34 state-of-the-art projectors totaling almost one million lumens.

For more information, visit www.artonthemart.com.

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About theMART

theMART (formerly The Merchandise Mart), located in the center of the sought-after River North submarket, is interwoven into the fabric of Chicago as an innovator in business, technology, culture, art, media and more. As the largest privately owned commercial building in the United States, it is also one of the world's leading commercial buildings, wholesale design centers and the preeminent international business location in Chicago. Encompassing 4.2 million gross square feet, theMART spans two city blocks, rises 25 stories, and is visited by an average of 30,000 people each business day and nearly 10 million people annually. Offering continuous innovation and creativity from leading manufacturers and design forward showrooms, theMART serves as the home to Chicago's most creative and technologically innovative companies including Motorola Mobility, 1871, Yelp, PayPal and MATTER, as well as Fortune 500 companies ConAgra, Allstate, Kellogg, Beam Suntory and Grainger. For more information, visit themart.com.

About the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

The Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) is dedicated to enriching Chicago's artistic vitality and cultural vibrancy. This includes fostering the development of Chicago's non-profit arts sector, independent working artists and for-profit arts businesses; providing a framework to guide the City's future cultural and economic growth, via the Chicago Cultural Plan; marketing the City's cultural assets to a worldwide audience; and presenting high-quality, free and affordable cultural programs for residents and visitors. For more information, visit Chicago.gov/dcase.

About the Year of Chicago Dance

In deep partnership with the local dance community, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) have designated 2022 as the **Year of Chicago Dance**. This citywide, year-long focus on dance is the first of its kind in the U.S. The collaborative initiative will activate Chicago's dance industry to address critical issues facing dancers and the field of dance including funding, space, and capacity building — and to consider the sustainability of this work. The Year of Chicago Dance, of course, includes dance performances, social dancing, and special events for the public in dozens of venues throughout the city. 2022 Year of Chicago Dance follows the successes of 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020/21

initiatives, which highlighted Chicago's public art, our creative youth, and the city's vibrant theatre and music scenes. Partners include dance service organizations **Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project**, **Chicago Dancemakers Forum**, and **See Chicago Dance** — as well as **Art on theMART**, Night Out in the Parks at the Chicago Park District and many other presenters and funders. For updates throughout the year, visit **YearofChicagoDance.com** and join the conversation using #YearofChicagoDance.

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