

# CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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## “SITE UNSEEN 2009: (DIS)ABLING CONDITIONS”

### A Site-Specific Performance Event Takes Over the Chicago Cultural Center November 9, 2009, 6-9 pm

For one night only on Monday, November 9, 2009, from 6-9 p.m., the Chicago Cultural Center will host **Site Unseen**, a site-specific performance event featuring theater, dance, music, and visual art by individual artists and ensembles of local and international acclaim. Presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs, the performances, installations, and video works will all consider issues around disability. Works will be created specifically for the architectural spaces of the Chicago Cultural Center, located at 78 E. Washington Street. Admission is free.

Now in its sixth annual edition, **Site Unseen** 2009 will feature works by local artists that bring visibility to a broad range of disabilities. The theme emerged because Julie Laffin, the project's ongoing curator, has become increasingly disabled by environmental illness and complications from chronic Lyme Disease. This year's presentation reflects her own struggles with new disabilities and the effects on her artistic collaboration with Chicago DCA Theater Director Claire Geall Sutton. Along with this year's assistant curator, Clover Morrell, Laffin is presenting a piece that will bring her virtual presence to the Cultural Center.

Participating artists creating audio, performance, spoken word, movement-based, and media installation art include Mike Ervin and Rahnee Patrick, Judith Harding in collaboration with Still Point Theatre Collective, James Kubie and Katrina Chamberlin, Marissa Perel and Madeleine Bailey, Debra Tolchinsky, Unreal-estates (Annette Barbier and Drew Browning), and Project Onward.

Performances will take place concurrently throughout the galleries, halls, rooms, and even elevators of the Chicago Cultural Center and need not be viewed in any particular order.

The performances and installations in **Site Unseen** include:

#### **May I Have by Judith Harding in collaboration with Still Point Theatre Collective**

##### **Randolph Cafe**

An integrated ensemble of eleven performers with and without developmental disabilities create a movement-centered work that address issues of inclusion and transparent barriers faced by those with developmental disabilities.

#### **Elevator Music by Unreal-estates (Annette Barbier and Drew Browning)**

##### **Randolph Street Elevators**

Writings, interviews, and documentary sounds from both the disabled rights activists and the medical community are used to consider the differences between these groups' differing approaches towards disabilities. The spoken words are processed so that, while understandable, they become musical as well, cloaking what may for some be an uncomfortable message in an aesthetically pleasing form.

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**shared body by Marissa Perel and Madeleine Bailey**

**Preston Bradley Hall**

Utilizing sound and sculpture, this performance installation looks at the survival with and metamorphosis from disabilities through confinement and exposure.

**From the Fat Off Our Bones by James Kubie and Katrina Chamberlin**

**GAR Memorial Hall and Rotunda**

James Kubie and Katrina Chamberlin act as intermediaries between the living and the dead, ritualizing the acts that take place in the slaughterhouse. Through video and performance, the audience experiences the slaughter and transition from body to soap and bone china, culminating in an act of ceremonial foot washing. Presented in collaboration with Joseph Belknap and Yoni Goldstein.

**But what is it on the back? By Debra Tolchinsky**

**Crossover Corridor between Preston Bradley Hall and Claudia Cassidy Theater**

Debra Tolchinsky's ongoing fascination with bodily obsession and brain aberrations is ever apparent in her new installation. Her video and light installation evokes neurons firing on the brain, but as the lights cease to respond in the expected quick and coordinated fashion, the work takes a personal, anecdotal twist.

**The 2327 Commandments for Communicating with the Handicapable: Disability Etiquette 101 by Mike Ervin and Rahnee Patrick**

**Dance Studio Theater 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**

Self-described disability guerillas Mike Ervin and Rahnee Patrick present their own style of original, activist comedy. Sending up one of life's many minefields of false politeness, the wife and husband team present this workshop providing 2327 rules of "disability etiquette."

**Remote Intimations by Clover Morell and Julie Laffin**

**Claudia Cassidy Theater**

Inspired by Claire Geall Sutton's commitment to accommodate Site Unseen curator Julie Laffin's disability, this work allows audience members to engage in conversation with her via live video feed as assistant curator Clover Morell offers tea. Laffin, who has curated *Site Unseen* since its inception, is unable to enter the public sphere due to chronic illness and severe environmental sensitivity. As she communicates and interacts from home, her image is projected in the theater allowing the public to witness the dialogue.

**The Project Onward Project by DCA's Project Onward**

**First Floor Garland Room**

Project Onward is the Department of Cultural Affairs studio program for artists living with mental and developmental disabilities. For *Site Unseen*, the visionary work of these artists comes to life in a series of live music and spoken-word performances, video projections, and multi-media projects. Additionally, The Project Onward Project features documentary footage of the artists along with first-hand accounts of their experience and large-scale projections of their work. Performances include Louis DeMarco's musical exploration of his imaginary world Loudemar and a dramatic reading of work by David Blaisdell.

Chicago DCA Theater offers downtown audiences an off-Loop theater experience with an exciting look at the vibrant emerging theater companies that call Chicago home. For more information about **Site Unseen** and Chicago DCA Theater, call 312.742.TIXS (8497) or visit [www.dcatheater.org](http://www.dcatheater.org). The enhanced website features more information about DCA Theater performances and programs, including a blog, photo galleries, and visitor information.

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Note to Press: Electronic images are available at [www.dcatheater.org/press](http://www.dcatheater.org/press) or by request.