



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Agency: Craft in Chicago from the 1970s-80s and Beyond***

September 21 - December 22, 2024

Opening Reception: Saturday, September 21 from 11 a.m - 6 p.m.

**Chicago, IL – September 5, 2024** – The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (UIMA) is excited to announce its upcoming exhibition, *Agency: Craft In Chicago from the 1970s-80s and Beyond*, opening on **Saturday, September 21, 2024**, with an Opening Reception from **11:00 AM to 6:00 PM**. Part of Art Design Chicago, this exhibition explores the rise of "high-craft" in Chicago art from the 1970s through the 1980s and its impact on contemporary artists, especially those on the margins, such as immigrant, women, LGBTQ, Black, and other artists of color.

The exhibition highlights how Chicago artists navigated a landscape shaped by economic barriers, limited access to formal education, and evolving gallery systems. Many artists turned to alternative spaces, such as art fairs and DIY venues, which offered more exposure and financial viability compared to traditional galleries. Focusing on craft, class, and cultural context, the exhibition explores how accessibility and economic constraints influenced artistic production. For many, the cost of art education and the commitment required were significant barriers. In response, artists embraced DIY approaches, innovating with traditional materials and breaking away from New York-centric standards.

Chicago's cultural and political climate of the 1970s and 1980s—marked by activism, the women's movement, and civil rights efforts—also shaped the art scene. Government programs like the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) encouraged creativity, even as funding remained limited. This spurred artists to assert their agency and make their voices heard.

The exhibition also addresses tensions in Chicago's art community between maintaining high production values and resisting conformity to norms. Early debates in the *New Art Examiner* capture this dynamic, with artists advocating for originality and new forms of expression.

*Agency: Craft In Chicago from the 1970s-80s and Beyond* invites visitors to explore these themes through works that reflect Chicago's spirit of innovation and defiance, resonating with today's artists who continue to challenge the boundaries of craft.

For media inquiries, interviews, or more information, please contact our Marketing Consultant Alexandra Senycia at [alex@uima-chicago.org](mailto:alex@uima-chicago.org).

### **Participating Artists:**

Aviva Alter, Ani Afshar, Bryana Bibbs, Eric Bladholm, Sharon Bladholm, Betty Venus Blue, June Carpenter, Gillion Carrara, Frank Connet, Salvador Dominguez, Ted Drendel, Judy Roston Freilich, Noelle Garcia, Kenya Moffet Garner, Lourdes Guerrero, Donna Hapac, Juarez Hawkins, Dorothy Hughes, Malika Jackson, Eric Jensen, Indira Freitas Johnson, David L. Johnson, Marva Lee Pitchford Jolly, Alexandra Diachenko Kochman, Jaroslava Kuchma, Christine LaRue, Melissa Leandro, Dennis Lee Mitchell, Lola Ayisha Ogbara, Chris Pappan, Yoonshin Park, Cristal Sabbagh, Utkan Salman, Yvette Kaiser Smith, Doug Stock, Kathy Weaver, Jason Wesaw, Anders Zanichkowsky, Marzena Ziejka

### **About the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art:**

The Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art (UIMA) preserves and promotes contemporary art as a shared expression of the Ukrainian and American experience. UIMA develops, utilizes and encourages artistic talent through exhibitions, concerts, readings, lectures and films to serve the cultural needs of our community and city, and thereby strengthen cultural understanding and diversity.



Yoonshin Park, *Don't push too hard / I am giving you the nice corner / I will have all my thoughts float in the air / Push and pull to the center of the border*, 2022, v Vinyl, glitter, binder rings, 16 x 12 x 10 inches



Juarez Hawkins, *Iron Guardian II*, 2024, White stoneware with red iron oxide and iron shino glaze, 14.5 x 4.75 x 6.75 inches



Jaroslava Kuchma, *Tarts*, Warp: cotton; Weft: wool, acrylic, and other yarns, 50.5 x 79 inches, Private Collection of Sheldon Broder