

**Embargoed Until**  
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*Water Tower  
Arts District*

## Water Tower Arts District Launches with 15 Cultural Organizations in Unique Coalition



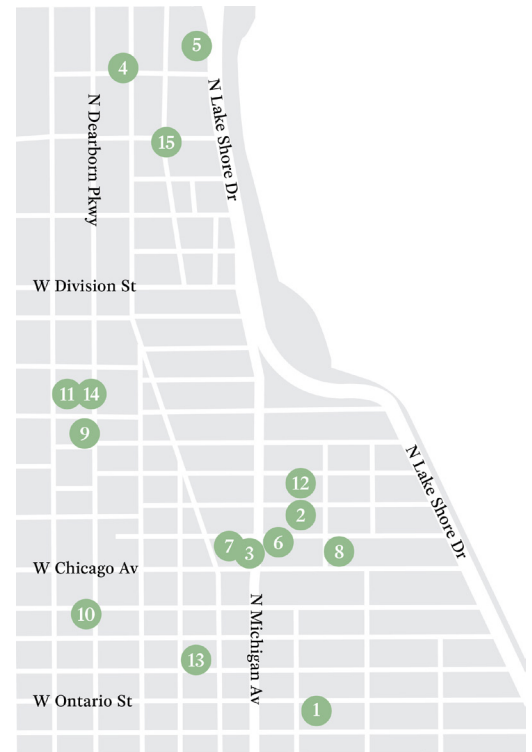
Photo: Assaf Evron

March 12, 2019 – Today, **Mark Kelly**, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, announced the official launch of the **Water Tower Arts District** at a public event at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Fifteen of Chicago’s renowned cultural organizations, all located within walking distance of the historic Chicago Water Tower on Michigan Avenue, have come together to form a unique cultural coalition in an area that is reemerging from its roots as a thriving arts center.

“This important partnership of arts organizations reveals Chicago’s rich cultural diversity available to residents and visitors,” said **Mayor Emanuel**. “The Water Tower Arts District will bring new energy and attention to our local cultural institutions, which are vital to the cultural tourism of our city and state.”

The Water Tower Arts District is comprised of the following cultural organizations: (1) The Arts Club of Chicago, (2) Broadway in Chicago’s Broadway Playhouse at Water Tower Place, (3) City Gallery in the Historic Water Tower, (4) Graham Foundation, (5) International Museum of Surgical Science, (6) Lookingglass Theatre Company, (7) Loyola University Museum of Art (LUMA), (8) Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), (9) the Newberry Library, (10) Poetry Foundation, (11) Porchlight Music Theatre, (12) Richard Gray Gallery, (13) the Richard H. Driehaus Museum, (14) the Ruth Page Center for the Arts, and (15) the Society of Architectural Historians.

The Water Tower Arts District (WTAD) is named for its location near the iconic Water Tower which was once a thriving bohemian arts area in the early 1900s called Towertown, akin to Greenwich Village in New York or the Latin Quarter in Paris. “This tightly knit group of arts organizations raises the same spirit of camaraderie and collaboration as they reclaim the District and invite visitors to experience a diverse array of cultural activities, in addition to the world-class shopping and dining on The Magnificent Mile,” said Commissioner Mark Kelly.



The launch event featured presentations by the fifteen organizations. The following special guests also performed: artist and historian **Pamela Bannos** in conversation with Mark Kelly on the history of the Water Tower area; artist **Brendan Fernandes**, who was recently recognized for his inclusion in the prestigious Whitney Biennial; Jeff Award-winning actor **Michelle Lauto** with Porchlight Music Theatre performing a number from *Funny Girl*; and artists from the **Ruth Page Center** and **CDI – Concert Dance, Inc.**

The graphic identity and website also debuted today at watertowerarts.org, and was created by Chicago designers **Michael Savona**, and **Tobey Albright** and **Mollie Edgar** from **Hour**. The website features a hotlinked map to all of the WTAD organizations, with descriptions and upcoming activities, accompanied by commissioned photographs of each institution by celebrated Chicago artist **Assaf Evron**.

WTAD organizations are developing special events and integrated programming, such as the recent collaboration between the Richard H. Driehaus Museum and MCA for the current Driehaus Museum exhibition on contemporary British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare CBE, as well as the partnership with Graham Foundation and Poetry Foundation to present an upcoming reading by American poet, Charles Bernstein. Each cultural organization brings support and resources to the coalition which, in turn, provides new collective opportunities to serve Chicago and extend and strengthen their educational outreach in the community. WTAD members look forward to exploring opportunities that will fuel collaborative creative efforts and activities to further enhance cultural enrichment for the City of Chicago.

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