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## **MCA Chicago celebrates the U.S. premiere of *She Mad Season One*, a solo exhibition by L.A.-based artist Martine Syms.**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is thrilled to present “*She Mad Season One*,” a solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist **Martine Syms** (b. 1988, Los Angeles, CA; lives in Los Angeles, CA). Syms is widely recognized for a multidisciplinary practice that reflects on contemporary visual culture with humor and biting social commentary.



*Bitch Zone* (still), 2020, Video (color, sound). 00:10:51 mins.  
Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue, NYC

The exhibition features Syms’s five-part video series *She Mad* (2015-2021) and marks the U.S. premiere of *The Non-Hero*, the most recent episode in the series. *She Mad* is a semi-autobiographical sitcom about a young Black woman trying to make it as an artist in Los Angeles. Drawing from early cinema, television shows, advertisements, and internet memes, Syms explores the ways Black experiences are constructed on television, in film, and online.

“Syms has emerged as one of the defining artists of her generation. Her work has an uncanny ability to show you what has been there all along—the conventions embedded in mass media, those tropes, stereotypes, and clichés that are so commonplace they often go unnoticed, even as they continue to shape the public imagination.” —Jadine Collingwood, Assistant Curator.

The exhibition situates five video works, *A Pilot for a Show About Nowhere* (2015), *Laughing Gas* (2016), *Intro to Threat Modeling* (2017), *Bitch Zone* (2020), and *The Non-Hero* (2021), within an immersive sculptural installation featuring newly produced custom seating and exposed aluminum studs painted in the artist’s signature shade of purple—a reference to both the chroma key backdrops frequently used in the post-production of films and television shows and Alice Walker’s 1982 novel *The Color Purple*.

*The Non-Hero* (2021) takes the form of a series of brief clips modeled after rapper Lil Nas X's popular "Life Story" videos on the social media platform TikTok. Mirroring its source material, Syms's video blurs the lines between fact and fiction to examine the versions of ourselves we share on social media. Another highlight of the exhibition, the four-channel video *Laughing Gas* (2016), is based on a 1907 slapstick comedy of the same name, notable for featuring the Black silent-film actress Bertha Regustus in the lead role. In this modern restaging of the film, Syms stars as the main character who goes to the dentist, receives laughing gas, and then learns that her insurance company has denied coverage for the visit. Combining footage from security cameras, television clips, and animated GIFs, Syms puts her version of the character into dialogue with contemporary representations of Blackness in popular media.



Martine Syms, *Laughing Gas* (still), 2016. 4-channel video (color, sound) 00:07:12 mins  
Courtesy of the artist and Bridget Donahue, NYC

The exhibition is produced in collaboration with Bergen Kunsthall, in Bergen, Norway. The MCA's presentation is curated by Jadine Collingwood, Assistant Curator, with Jack Schneider, Curatorial Assistant.

The MCA's exhibition will be open to the public from July 2, 2022, until February 12, 2023, and is presented in the Bergman Family Gallery on the museum's second floor.

### **About the artist**

Martine Syms (b. 1988, Los Angeles, CA; lives in Los Angeles, CA) is the recipient of the Creative Capital Award, a United States Artists fellowship, the Tiffany Foundation award, and the Future Fields Art Prize. She obtained an MFA from Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2017), and a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2007). She has exhibited widely, including presentations at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Art Institute of Chicago; New Museum, New York; the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; and ICA London. From 2007–2011 she was co-director of the Chicago artist-run project space Golden Age, and she currently runs Dominica Publishing, an imprint dedicated to exploring Blackness in visual culture. Additionally, she has done commissioned work for brands such as Prada, Nike, Celine, and Kanye West, among others. She is in a band called Aunt Sister and hosts CartalkLA, a monthly radio show on NTS.

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*This exhibition is supported by the Women Artists Initiative, a philanthropic commitment to further equity across gender lines and promote the work and ideas of women artists.*

### **About The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The museum is generously supported by its Board of Trustees; individual and corporate members; private and corporate foundations, including the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and government agencies.

Programming is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency. Museum capital improvements are supported by a Public Museum Capital Grant from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The MCA is a proud member of Museums in the Park and receives major support from the Chicago Park District.

The MCA is located at 220 E. Chicago Avenue, one block east of Michigan Avenue. The museum and sculpture garden are open Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm and Tuesday from 10 am to 8 pm. The museum is closed on Monday. Tuesdays are Community Free Days with free admission for Illinois residents. Suggested general admission is \$12 for adults and \$7 for students and seniors. Children 12 years of age and under, MCA members, and members of the military are admitted free.

Information about MCA exhibitions, programs, and special events is available on the MCA website at [mcachicago.org](http://mcachicago.org) or by phone at 312.280.2660.