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MCA Denver exhibit explores movement through interactive art, performance

By Libby Smith

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The Museum of Contemporary Art Denver is exhibiting "Movements Toward Freedom," which brings together 21 artists to explore what movement means to them. The exhibit is interactive and throughout the run of the show several of the installations and sculptures are expanded through performance.

"I utilize the patterns on the floor to travel through the mirrors ... play a lot with like the light and movement of the mirrors," said Dominique Willis, one of the performing dancers in Brendan Fernandes's installation "Within Seeing."

The installation is set up like a dance studio with ballet bars and various mirrors throughout the space.

There are also markings on the floor and words and phrases on the mirrors. Willis's role is to dance, stretch, and explore the space.

"I'm trying to just like connect all the pieces of the exhibit and the words that are coming through in the music," she told CBS News Colorado.

Fernandes created the installation based on his own dance background. He says that in dance you use the mirrors to learn the steps and movements of dance and then at some point

the mirrors are taken away for performance. He uses that experience as a metaphor for self-reflection.

"For me, this idea of questioning who's seeing. Am I seeing? Are you seeing? The idea of like the mirror gives you one reflection, but also we see ourselves, but other people see ourselves," Fernandes explained. "I hope that people find a playful experience. I hope that people understand an experience of looking at themselves, and maybe challenging themselves."

"Within Seeing" is just one of the many installations and sculptures in "Movements Toward Freedom." Leilani Lynch is the Associate Curator who put together the exhibit. She said that she was surprised how quickly health and fitness became one of the themes.

"The artist has repurposed an actual basketball court floor. And with that, in its sort of new abstract configuration, he's thinking about the dynamics between the group and the individual. How we move about as a team. How we have to sacrifice our own desires for the good of the group. How that can be expanded out into society," Lynch explained about Ronny Quevedo's installation called "at the line."

Many of the pieces are interactive. Audiences are encouraged to move within the pieces and meditate.

"I hope more than anything, it sort of imbues a sense of hope or joy that we can garner from movement and dance and feeling the power of our bodies moving in space," Lynch said.

"Movements Toward Freedom" explores not only the ways our bodies move, but how they can move together and the community that can be built from that.

"Movements Toward Freedom" runs through February 2, 2024 at MCA Denver. Denver Arts Week runs through Sunday, November 10, 2024.