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Slow and Steady Wins the Race at "Slow Dance"

The MCA's group exhibition slows art down in an ever-faster moving world.

BY TEDDY SANDLER | OCTOBER 12, 2026



Brendan Fernandes, "Inaction" (2019). Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery, Wesleyan University. Courtesy of the artist, Monique Meloche Gallery and Susan Inglett Gallery/Photo: John Groo, courtesy Ezra and Cecile Zilkha Gallery

The accelerated speed of technological change begs the body for a break. As AI leaders call for a slowdown, "Slow Dance" organizes a much-needed respite within the five rooms at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Unfortunately, the few pieces within the show remain unceremoniously dormant. Without a performer in slow, deliberate intervention, the exhibition fails to retain the attention of most museumgoers. As I explored the sparse gallery on a rainy weekend, milking the titular slow dance, others zipped through. My bias is to spend time with the artist's work, which surprised a visitor who asked me what gave me pause. With minimal works to fill the galleries, a myriad of "please do not touch" defangs their playful seeding into a

post-apocalyptic playground. Suffering from the same symptoms it describes, “Slow Dance” subtly rephrases physical space as a canvas for performance.

Similar to Marcel Duchamp’s infamous “Fountain,” the exhibition’s intellectual pursuit rests in intentionality. Featuring six artists, Brendan Fernandes, Gordon Hall, Geumhyung Jeong, Carolyn Lazard, Melanie McLain and Cally Spooner, the artworks center relations demonstrated by videos and performance. “Leans, Reverses” (2022) by Carolyn Lazard features three televisions simultaneously playing the same sequence of events, translated through three actors. Left to right, the videos each play exclusively captions and sound: Lazard’s instructions to a dancer, contact microphone recordings and written descriptions of the performance by Jerron Herman, and audio descriptions read by poet Joselia Rebekah Hughes. The eighteen-minute audiovisual work makes the invisible body cacophonous; overlapping channels collide and wane with various decays as Lazard’s orders inspire her participants with fury as they work to complete her call. Instead of a visual peek of the performance, the heightened peripheral senses enable a colorful spectral image. Care—impacted, precise and realistic—gives space for solidarity as “Privatization” (2022), a piece composed of HEPA filter-purified air runs through the labor of six filters, the number needed to recirculate the gallery’s volume every hour. Lazard’s work swells with structural gains from her reinforcements.

Two of the remaining works are interactive: a carpeted area and structure by McLain as well as a heavy locked cabinet by Spooner. McLain’s “Peripersonal” (2023) sterile installation features molded seats and peek-a-boo holes that mediate interactivity. The lines of sight and touch form obtuse angles that temper the alluring red carpet that grounds the work. Spooner’s “Restless Work” (2025) and evolving score prioritize patience next to the immobile cabinet. Drawings and poetic ruminations on the surrounding walls address the dominant furniture in the room, with cyclic warmups that awaken the ephemera of potential.

“Slow Dance” boldly takes up space at the MCA during Chicago’s winter months. Constructed instead of whittled items, the suspended objects are a prescription for patience. Throughout the run, performers will provoke the downcast objects. A visit, best timed with these activations, enables a humble frameshift that only ennui allows.