SMART MUSEUM OF ART
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

5550 S. Greenwood Ave.
Chicago, Illinois 60637
smartmuseum.uchicago.edu



Smart Museum of Art announces major site-specific installation by Nina Chanel Abney

The large-scale installation opens September 22, 2026, with artist's solo exhibition to follow in Spring 2027

CHICAGO, IL — The **Smart Museum of Art** at the University of Chicago is honored to present a site-specific installation entitled *Between Us* by artist **Nina Chanel Abney**, on view from September 22, 2026, through July 2027.

For more than two decades, Nina Chanel Abney has taken the most familiar images of American life, drawn from advertising, sports, cartoons, and the news, and turned them against themselves, using humor and accessibility to draw viewers in before the harder questions surface. For the commission at the Smart, Abney is creating a 70-feet wide and 40-feet high mural with those references in mind. *Between Us* borrows the visual language of childhood instruction — diagrams, wall charts, puzzles — and lets it quietly fall apart. What emerges is a landscape of entanglement, where degradation, extraction, labor, and capital are revealed as parts of the same system, one that decides who is supported and who is exposed.

As Abney says, "*Between Us* borrows the friendliest language we have: the instructional diagram. These are the images that first taught many of us to read the world. Such pictures promise that reality can be sorted into clean, recognizable parts. The mural begins from that promise. But then, the categories, the parts, refuse to stay put."

Organized by curator **Galina Mardilovich**, *Between Us* is commissioned as part of the Smart's ongoing Threshold series, which brings large-scale installations of contemporary art annually to the Eunice Ratner Reception Gallery in the Museum's lobby. Recent commissioned artists have included Theaster Gates, Robert Earl Paige, and Haegue Yang, among others.

"Nina has a particularly attuned visual language and a powerful way of creating space to ask difficult questions in her work. We are thrilled to have the opportunity to bring her incredible practice to the Smart," notes Mardilovich.

Between Us will serve as a precursor and framework to Nina Chanel Abney's major solo exhibition, *While Supplies Last*, opening March 23, 2027, at the Smart. The exhibition takes its title from the language of the sale rack, a phrase that promises abundance and announces scarcity at once. What runs low here is not merchandise but the conditions that make ordinary life possible: clean water, functioning infrastructure, breathable air, public trust, collective responsibility. Across paintings, sculpture, works on paper, an experimental installation created specifically for the show, Abney takes the current climate crisis as a starting point to examine the interconnected systems of power that shape contemporary life: extraction, race, consumer culture, militarization, labor, media, and care. The exhibition will not ask how we might save the planet, but something harder: what happens when crisis stops feeling like an emergency and becomes the weather we move through, and what do we still owe one another while the supply holds.



While Supplies Last will be accompanied by a publication conceived in collaboration with Abney, printed in Chicago, and published by the Smart Museum of Art. Taking the form of a zine, it will reflect both the immediacy of the exhibition's themes and the artist's graphic sensibility. Both *Between Us* and *While Supplies Last* will be supported by a robust slate of programming across disciplines and age ranges, including an artist-led Family Day this fall.

“Nina Chanel Abney's practice is expansive in every sense — formally, conceptually, and in the urgency of the questions it asks. We are proud to present this work within the University of Chicago's tradition of rigorous, interdisciplinary inquiry, and to share it with the different audiences we are honored to serve,” says **Vanja Malloy**, Dana Feitler Director of the Smart.

Admission to the Smart's exhibitions is always free and open to all.

Principal support for *While Supplies Last* is provided by Amy and Paul Carbone.

Major support is provided by The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

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IMAGE CREDITS

Cover: Nina Chanel Abney, photography by Claire Dorn.

Page 2: Nina Chanel Abney, *Black People (BP)*, 2022, Triptyph collage on panel, Paper size: 72 × 84″, each panel, Framed dimensions: 73 1/4 × 85 1/4 × 1 3/8″, each. © Nina Chanel Abney. Courtesy of the artist and Pace Prints.

Page 3: Nina Chanel Abney, *All Day It Burned*, 2025, relief print, 62 3/4 × 46 7/8″. © Nina Chanel Abney. Courtesy of the artist and Pace Prints.

About Nina Chanel Abney

Nina Chanel Abney (b. 1982, Harvey, IL) works across painting, sculpture, public art, and design. Her practice is rooted in a rigorous inquiry into visual language, how images shape our understanding of ourselves, one another, and the world. Drawing on contemporary mass media, advertising, and public campaigns, she develops layered compositions that embrace color and often unapologetic scale. Paying homage to the color theories of Matisse, the legacy of cubists Picasso and Léger, and the synesthetic sensibilities of Harlem Renaissance greats Douglas and Lawrence, Abney brings these historical movements into contemporary pertinence while broaching subjects as diverse as race, celebrity, religion, politics, and sex — moving fluidly between the popular and the institutional, the graphic and the painterly.

Abney has presented solo exhibitions at the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art; Kunsthal KAdE, the Netherlands; Perrotin, Paris; The School | Jack Shainman Gallery, Kinderhook, NY; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; and the Nasher Museum of Art, Duke University, among many others. Major public commissions include Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall façade, the Miami World Center, the High Line, and John F. Kennedy International Airport. Her work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Brooklyn Museum, and the Dallas Museum of Art, among others.

ninachanel.com

About the Smart Museum of Art

The mission of the University of Chicago's Smart Museum of Art is to lead integrative research and create transformative experiences through art.

The Smart is a site for rigorous inquiry and exchange that encourages the examination of complex issues through the lens of art objects and artistic practice. Through strong community and scholarly partnerships, the Museum incorporates diverse ideas, identities, and experiences into its exhibitions and collections, academic initiatives, and public programming.

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Tuesday–Sunday
10:00 am–4:30 pm
Admission is always free.