

## MCA, Lookingglass team up for Family Day

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*Author: Delia O'Hara, The Chicago Sun-Times*

A couple of neighbors are getting together Saturday to throw a party for families, with tours, circus activities, crafts, a dog show, imaginative play, parades and, perhaps, a play. And it's all free.

The generous neighbors behind Family Day are the Museum of Contemporary Art and Lookingglass Theatre, two esteemed and creative Chicago institutions that have been enhancing their family programming of late. Lookingglass is in the Water Tower Water Works at Chicago and Michigan avenues, and the MCA is a block east.

"We have a lot in common. We are both interested in innovative ways of getting families working together," says Sarah Jesse, the MCA's manager of public programs.

The fun starts in the morning. One Family Day activity at the MCA will have kids assuming the "persona" of a sought-after star, with the help of wigs, sunglasses and other props, and answering questions about the celebrity lifestyle. The inspiration for this activity is "Andy Warhol Supernova," an MCA show featuring perhaps the most influential artist of our time, which families will have a chance to tour.

Another stop on the gallery tour will be Chicago cartoonist Chris Ware's detailed, comic-book-style "Building Stories" series. Visitors will work on "building stories" of their own, complete with dialogue balloons, on a big two-dimensional "building" on the floor.

In honor of an exhibit of Alexander Calder's works -- he is famous for his mobiles -- families will make headdresses with dangling mobiles to take home.

The MCA's two-year-old family initiative is all about collaboration, and an exhibit (through June 25) of the scratch drawings by the artist Eduardo Kac, and a separate set created by his 10-year-old daughter, Miriam, might give visitors some ideas about how fruitful a time families can have working together, Jesse says.

"[Eduardo and Miriam] both inspired each other. [Their exhibit] shows the exchange of creativity that can take place between parent and child," she says. "It's really a metaphor for our goals for our family programming."

The MCA reinstated its family programming after officials realized children were some of their likeliest fans, Jesse says.

"We can be appropriate for kids, and even more relevant to them than some other art museums, because contemporary art is the art from their own time."

Lookingglass Theatre Company will send its Young Ensemble to the MCA to perform, along with the Advanced Teen Ensemble of the Actors Gymnasium, an Evanston-based circus and performing arts school. Actors Gymnasium staffers will be on hand at the MCA to teach juggling and other circus arts as well.

Over at Lookingglass, staffers in the Education and Community Outreach Program will lead backstage tours, teach clowning lessons, help kids make their own clown hats and animal masks, and put on an imaginary circus.

Several times during the day, children will parade back and forth between the two institutions with all their fanciful regalia. Weather permitting, performing dogs will strut their stuff and chalk artists will supervise visitors in decorating sidewalks along the parade route.

Children older than 10 and their parents are eligible to see a free performance of Lookingglass' production of Charles Dickens' "The Old Curiosity Shop" at 3 p.m., or to get one free ticket for every ticket they buy for the 8 p.m. performance. (Saturday only; make advance reservations, as space is limited).

At 2 p.m., as Lookingglass prepares for the performances, "all the clowning stuff will go over to the [MCA]" for the duration of the Family Day festivities, says Jody Davidson, director of education and community programs at Lookingglass.

"We want to make families aware of what is available at Lookingglass," says Davidson. "Lookingglass works with 14,000 kids every year."

Those programs take the form of classes, residencies at schools, three summer camps (including one at the MCA) and the Young Ensemble, a free theater-arts training program for children ages 8-18.

And next season, beginning with a holiday production, Lookingglass Theatre's Young Ensemble will perform three plays for family audiences, Davidson says.

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#### FAMILY DAY

- 10:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago, (312) 280-2660 or [www.mcachicago.org](http://www.mcachicago.org)

- Lookingglass Theatre Company, 821 N. Michigan, (312) 337-0665; [www.lookingglasstheatre.org](http://www.lookingglasstheatre.org)

- Free for children under age 13 and their adult companions

**Caption:** Photo: Art projects for kids will be among the many activities during Saturday's Family Day held by Lookingglass Theatre and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

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