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MEDIA RELEASE: March 2, 2022

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FAÇADE OF A MADISON HOME SLATED FOR DEMOLITION WILL BE TRANSFORMED INTO AN ART OBJECT—AND AN ILLUSTRATION TOWARD A LEAD-FREE FUTURE—FOR AN UPCOMING MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART EXHIBITION

*Mel Chin:  
There's Something  
Happening Here*  
On View March 12  
through July 31,  
2022

>  
Mel Chin,  
*Safehouse*, 2008-10.  
Archival photograph,  
13x19 inches,  
Courtesy of the artist.



@mel.chin

MADISON, WI- An unoccupied home slated for demolition in Madison's Bay Creek neighborhood provided conceptual artist Mel Chin with a near-perfect opportunity to illustrate his commitment to the intersection of art with social, political, and environmental justice.

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A crew supporting Chin will extract a portion of the 1921 home's facade, including the front door, to replace the original work of art, *Safehouse Door*, which was to be displayed in the artist's upcoming Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) exhibition, *There's Something Happening Here*.

The original *Safehouse Door*, taken from a New Orleans home abandoned after Hurricane Katrina, has been widely exhibited in earlier Mel Chin shows. The artist planned for it to be a nearly floor-to-ceiling object in the MMoCA show. But the piece was

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unable to go on view due to structural issues discovered after it was shipped to Madison from North Carolina, where it had been in storage.

With *There's Something Happening Here* opening on March 12, 2022, Chin and his team swung into action, working with city engineering, the Madison Arts Commission, and Deconstruction, Inc., along with MMoCA Curator of Exhibitions Leah Kolb, to find a suitable replacement for this exhibition centerpiece. A portion of the home, which is being torn down to make way for a reconfigured road, will have newfound cultural value as the skeleton of a new artwork highlighting Chin's longtime artistic campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of lead poisoning in children.

*The Safehouse Door* is part of the larger *Fundred Project*, which Chin initiated in New Orleans at the *Safehouse* (2008-2010), a former home in the lead-laden St. Roch neighborhood. During the project, community members created "cash," or "Fundreds," which act as creative currency—many drawn by children—to represent the expressed value of ending the invisible threat of lead poisoning, whether it comes from water, soil, paint, toys, or dust. This art initiative has grown into the largest social art engagement in the nation, with nearly half of a million individually hand-drawn dollar bills already collected. MMoCA visitors can create Fundreds at the Museum to take part in the campaign.

Chin said: "It is exciting to see a physical part of Madison included in the history of this project. I have seen people of different city departments and the arts coming together to approve and assist in this effort in record time," something Chin said is exceptionally rare in his forty-plus years of art practice. The nationwide project, he said, has been about cities all over America that have lead contamination issues. Local attention is a key part of the engagement.

#### ABOUT MMoCA

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art's galleries are always admission-free. The Museum's vision is to be an organization that fosters the exchange of ideas and creates experiences that will

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inspire a wide audience; be a nexus for the work of emerging and established regional, national, and international artists; serve as a catalyst for the continued development of a vigorous community of artists; and provide a forum that will encourage people to be challenged by, reflect on, and make connections between art and the world around them.

The Museum includes four galleries and The Shop, a space to provide interactive contemporary art experiences and educational workshops to Madison communities. The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view and serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, and cinema. Please visit [mmoca.org](http://mmoca.org) to learn more.

#### **ABOUT S.O.U.R.C.E STUDIO**

Founded by 2019 MacArthur Fellow and artist Mel Chin, S.O.U.R.C.E. is a 501c3 organization with a mission in its name: Sustained Operations Utilizing Resources for Culture, Communities and the Environment. S.O.U.R.C.E supports artists and produces projects and practices rooted in community, experimentation, creative methodologies, and social justice. S.O.U.R.C.E takes a distinctive and iterative approach that allows for experimentation and breakthroughs.

Since its founding in 2017, S.O.U.R.C.E. has managed, produced, and evolved the Fundred Project, an innovative and collaborative art engagement responding to the silent and invisible epidemic of lead poisoning. The Fundred Project connects hundreds of thousands of kids and communities nationwide to their Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., in an effort to raise awareness and advance actions to end lead poisoning.

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