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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Arts + Public Life Celebrates Grand Opening of L1 Retail Store and 10th Anniversary with October 9th 'Back On The Block' Community Event**

**Who:** Arts + Public Life

**What:** "Back On The Block" Grand Opening of L1 Retail Store and APL 10 Year Anniversary Celebration

**When:** October 9, 2021 1PM-5PM

**Where:** 300 East Block Of Garfield Boulevard in Chicago, IL

CHICAGO, IL — [Arts + Public Life \(APL\)](#), an initiative of UChicago Arts at the University of Chicago, is inviting the community to celebrate its 10 year anniversary with the grand opening of L1, a newly renovated retail store housing three South Side Black-owned businesses inside of Chicago's first historic "L" station built in 1892. The ['Back On The Block'](#) free open house event will take place on October 9, 2021 along the 300 East Block of Garfield Boulevard in Washington Park between 1PM - 5PM CT.

The L1 retail space is an extension of the L1 creative business accelerator (CBA) fellowship program [launched in August 2020](#) by Arts + Public Life in partnership with The Silver Room Foundation's urban planning and social impact arm, Proximity. The L1 program provides both a 20-month fellowship and 700 square feet of subsidised shared brick and mortar retail space for the inaugural cohort of three South Side entrepreneurs dedicated to scaling their creative businesses over the next two years— Peter Gaona of ReformedSchool, Tiffany Joi of Hemp Heals Body Shop, and Andrea Polk of Solo Noir and Zen Soul Apothecary.

"Back on the Block celebrates two important milestones for APL: the opening of the L1 Retail Store and Arts + Public Life's 10 year anniversary. The new L1 store fosters new economic opportunities for three extraordinary creative entrepreneurs from the South Side," said APL Director Adrienne Brown. "In addition to receiving business training and mentorship, the opening of the L1 retail store rounds out the offerings of the Creative Business Accelerator fellowship as a new platform for our fellows to offer their products to the public. The

opening of the L1 coincides with the commemoration of Arts + Public Life's 10 year anniversary which will allow the public to learn more about our history, current projects, and future plans.”

L1 is the third space operated and managed by Arts + Public Life on the Arts Block, joining the Arts Incubator, opened in 2013, and Green Line Performing Arts Center, opened in 2018. The newly renovated space is furnished with custom-made millwork designed and fabricated by local master craftsman, Norman Teague of Norman Teague Design Studio.

“I am overly excited to check ‘Having a Retail Location’ off of my vision board. October 2021 marks my 9th year in business for Solo Noir grooming products for men—down to the exact date in which I had my first launch party for the brand. This is a new exciting time for me as I also launch a new healing brand, Zen Soul Apothecary, with my daughter and re-explore empowering men through grooming,” said Andrea Polk, owner Solo Noir and Zen Soul Apothecary. “Although the great anticipation was our store launch, L1 has constructed a team of professionals to help prepare my brands to compete with major brands. Prior to the cohort, Solo Noir had minor retail placement. But during the cohort, I landed multiple big box retail partnerships in which the strategic planning often came from the support of their team.”

“I'm super excited about the L1 store opening this Fall. To me, it's important to have a brick-and-mortar store because it feels good to have a face-to-face connection with your customers within the community so they can feel, touch & smell the products as well as ask questions. Ultimately, our main priority is that our customers enjoy a safe, pleasurable & memorable shopping experience while visiting the L1 store,” said Tiffany Joi of Hemp Heals Body Shop. Peter Gaona of ReformedSchool’s vision for the L1 store is to “create bonds with customers as well as collaborate with other community partners. As a resident of Bronzeville/Washington Park I feel the importance of having businesses that I can walk to and support. I am excited to grow and take ReformedSchool to the next level and to share what I've learned to help the next group of entrepreneurs.”

Remarks from UChicago and City of Chicago leaders are expected during the inaugural ceremony, where guests are invited to spend an afternoon on the Arts Block to shop at L1, enjoy live performances by Bomba con Buya and poet Tara Betts, sounds by DJ Slomo from Future Rootz, visit artist-in-residence studios, and enjoy dessert provided by Justice of the Pies. ‘Back on the Block’ guests will also have the opportunity to view the 2021 APL and Center for the Study of Race, Politics, and Culture (CSRPC) Artist-in-Residence Exhibition *New Witnesses* at the Arts Incubator Gallery, the *Depth of Field: 65 Years of the Washington Park Camera Club* photography exhibition at the Arts Incubator 2nd Floor Flex Space, and a South Side Home Movie Project film screening at the Green Line Performing Arts Center.

“While we maintained in touch with our audiences through virtual platforms during the pandemic, face-to-face interaction is essential for us at Arts + Public Life,” said Brown. We are so excited to be back on the block and share the safe reactivation of the Arts Block with the South Side and Washington Park communities.”

Event Registration Link: <https://aplbackontheblock.eventbrite.com>

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### **Arts + Public Life**

Arts + Public Life (APL), an initiative of UChicago Arts, is a dynamic hub of exploration, expression, and exchange that centers people of color and fosters neighborhood vibrancy through the arts on the South Side of Chicago. As a neighborhood platform for arts and culture in Washington Park, APL provides residencies for Black and Brown artists and creative entrepreneurs, arts education for youth, and artist-led programming and

exhibitions. The L1 commerce focused addition to the Arts Block builds on APL's commitment to creative entrepreneurship and is an extension of the arts and culture redevelopment efforts of UChicago Arts.

L1 is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, Bank of America, and a generous gift from Raymond J. Iwanowski (Booth '97). Additional L1 curricular support and services are provided through a collaboration with UChicago's [Polsky Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation](#).

### **L1 Fellows**

Tiffany Joi is the owner of [Hemp Heals Body Shop](#), which provides luxurious bath and body products including CBD oil drops, pain relief salves, bath salts and whipped body butter. Peter Gaona is the owner of [ReformedSchool](#), which combines art, fashion, and eco-friendly materials, selling unique items to wear and dress your home that highlight history, social justice and pop culture. Andrea Polk is the owner of [Solo Noir for Men](#) and [Zen Soul Apothecary](#). Solo Noir provides all-natural skincare and grooming brand for men of color, and offers many two-in-one multipurpose products, tools, and techniques created to restore confidence through clear, healthy skin. Zen Soul Apothecary was launched in 2021 to help create balance and zen within the body and home with an array of products and services including reiki healing, crystal healing, chakra alignment and more.

### **The Arts Block**

The new L1 Retail Store is part of the Arts Block, a vibrant collection of cultural and commercial spaces on historic Garfield Boulevard in the Washington Park neighborhood. The Arts Block combines University of Chicago-led initiatives, programming produced by cultural organizations, and both philanthropic and private investments. Additional spaces on the Arts Block include the Arts Incubator and Rain Garden (2013), Green Line Performing Arts Center (2018), and Arts Lawn (scheduled to open in 2022), all projects of Arts + Public Life, as well as projects by Theaster Gates' Rebuild Foundation which includes their latest artist-led activation Retreat at Currency Exchange Café.

### **UChicago Arts**

UChicago Arts encompasses the University's robust cultural scene where scholars, students, artists and audiences converge, explore, and create. UChicago Arts maintains an ambitious suite of initiatives and programs to enhance the cultural landscape at the University of Chicago and on Chicago's South Side, including Arts + Public Life and its flagship project the Arts Incubator, the Arts, Science & Culture Initiative, the Richard and Mary L. Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry, and the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts. Joining academic departments and programs in the Division of the Humanities and the College, as well as professional organizations including the Court Theatre, Oriental Institute Museum, Smart Museum of Art, Renaissance Society, and University of Chicago Presents, and more than 60 student arts organizations, UChicago Arts is forging an integrative model for practice, presentation, and scholarship.

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