

## Northwestern University

# Brendan Fernandes wants to make you uncomfortable

The Weinberg visiting artist is among those representing Northwestern at Expo Chicago

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EVANSTON – A crowd of spectators line the walls of a pristine hotel room in Brooklyn, N.Y., watching as it is cleaned by a uniformed staff member. Mirroring the worker's physically demanding movements is a dancer clad in white overalls.

“It’s uncomfortable to watch others clean for us. This work is normally done behind the scenes and invisible. I’m trying to make visible those gestures to give them a sense of strength and agency,” Brendan Fernandes said about **“Clean Labour,”** a site-specific performance in 2017 presented in collaboration with More Art, the Wythe Hotel Brooklyn and Monique Meloche Gallery. The piece was conceived and created in part during his Northwestern University Kaplan Humanities Institute residency in 2016.

The visiting artist Weinberg College’s Department of Art Theory and Practice is having an eventful fall. In September alone, Fernandes is exhibiting artwork from the past decade in a solo exhibition at DePaul Art Museum, performing, speaking and signing books throughout the Expo Chicago weekend and mounting a public installation/dance performance in Toronto.

Ballet, which Fernandes studied from age 9 to 16 before progressing to modern technique in college, demands much of its students. “I’m interested in thinking about how we give value to those bodies that are performing — bodies moving that seemingly look effortless but are enduring and fatiguing,” Fernandes said.

Fernandes’ spring 2018 solo show at the Graham Foundation in Chicago, “The Master and Form,” combined architectural design and Joffrey Academy dancers in performances of sculptural endurance.

Discomfort is part of the point. Spectators of “Clean Labour” and “The Master and Form” become acutely aware of the physical toll of the labor of dance as well as the everyday movements of domestic work, jobs typically filled by immigrants or people positioned at the lower rungs of the social hierarchy.

Sidelined from dance by an injured hamstring and written off for not having the “right” feet or physique, Fernandes seeks to give agency to his project collaborators. “Creating agency is giving a voice and valuing the person one is collaborating with,” Fernandes said.

Fernandes arrived at Northwestern in 2016 as a Kaplan Artist in Residence. He currently teaches full-time as a visiting artist in the Department of Art Theory and Practice, where his initial two-year term was recently extended for an additional three years. This year Fernandes will teach undergraduate and graduate courses, including a seminar on post-colonialism and de-colonial processes.

Northwestern's strength in research and interdisciplinary collaborations have afforded ample opportunities for the Kenyan-Indian-Canadian artist to explore his academic interests in dance, the moving body, Marxism and queer and post-colonial theory.

"Working at a research institution like Northwestern has provide me with a rich environment to further my own research and share it with others," Fernandes said. "It has allowed me to make networking and research connections with many unique scholars and practitioners in various departments. Northwestern's libraries and facilities allow thinking and research to develop more fluidly. Having time and support to guide new ways of research and thinking is a priority at Northwestern and is a key reason why I love my position here."

### **Fall programs**

The solo exhibition "**Brendan Fernandes: The Living Mask**" is currently on view now through Dec. 16 at the DePaul Art Museum.

Further afield, Fernandes will present "**On Flashing Lights**," a public installation/dance performance, Sept. 29 in downtown Toronto. He is also working on a virtual reality installation for the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal.

More information about upcoming projects is available online at

[www.brendanfernandes.ca](http://www.brendanfernandes.ca).

### **Northwestern at Expo Chicago**

**Brendan Fernandes** is a featured artist at **Expo Chicago Sept. 27 to 30** at Navy Pier, where his work can be seen at the DePaul Art Museum booth and the Monique Meloche Gallery booth. His sculptural work will be activated multiple times throughout the weekend with performances danced by Joffrey Academy dancers.

Friday, Sept. 28, between 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Expo Chicago offers a prime opportunity to experience Fernandes' art: at 11:30 a.m. his work "Reverence" will be performed; at noon he will join art historian Sarah Thornton for a conversation on the Dialogues stage; and at 1 p.m., he will sign his new book "**Brendan Fernandes: As One**."

**Corinne Granof**, curator of academic programs at the Block Museum will

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participate in Expo Chicago's 2018 symposium panel "Making the Modern Image: Mid-Century Commercial Industry in Chicago" to discuss Block Museum's exhibition "**Up is Down: Mid-Century Experiments in Advertising and Film at the Goldsholl Studio**," Friday, Sept. 28 at 5:30 p.m.

**Judy Ledgerwood**, Alice Welsh Skilling Professor of Art in the Department of Art Theory and Practice, will have work on display at the Rhona Hoffman Gallery booth.

Expo Chicago presents the best in international contemporary art from 135 leading galleries, including 3,000 artists representing 27 countries and 63 cities. The exposition takes place at Navy Pier, 848 Grand Ave. in Chicago. Hours are Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.