

By moving our bodies through the installation, we physically inhabit a plot of the past, making us just another layer of time.

## YOU ARE HERE

Chicago has a history of unusual entrepreneurial practices, especially when it comes to the lakefront. From Captain George Streeter using a shipwrecked boat to fabricate claim on prime Gold Coast real estate (now called Streeterville) in the late 19th century to 2003 when Mayor Richard M. Daley tore up Meigs Field airport under the cover of night to create a concert park and nature reserve (now called Northerly Island), its citizens pride themselves in plowing alternative paths to realizing audacious plans. The story of the Chicago Beach Hotel is similar.

Before Hyde Park Art Center existed on its current site, the location was inhabited by the Chicago Beach Hotel (1892-1927). As the name states, the six-story luxury resort sat directly on a sandy beach complete with a picturesque boardwalk. The hotel was built to host travelers for the 1893 Columbian Exposition and was said to contain land enhanced by the developer, James Morgan, after dredging sand from Lake Michigan, dumping it on shore, and therefore claiming a larger portion of land. Bricks from the turreted hotel were unearthed during the remodeling of the Art Center's building in 2005, breathing new life into this Chicago lore. Inspired by this history of the Art Center's location, fiber artist Karen Reimer made a site-specific installation of fabric, wood, and sand to distort our perception of the horizon, much like the disappearance of lake into land over a century ago.

A canopy of stylized circles and geometric fragments bisects the gallery and carves out the space for two separate parallel installations—the horizon and the shoreline—encased in one room. Hand-dyed indigo fabric crafted from repurposed sheets, dishtowels, shirts, and other found cloth add another layer of history and context to the installation and took nearly six months for Reimer and assistants to stitch by hand. From the gallery floor, the fabric resembles a whirling sky overhead. Suspended in air, the blue hues glow like stained glass and are reminiscent of the vibrant Orphism abstractions of French painter, Robert Delaunay (1885-1941). The experience of the same fabric from atop the Jackman Goldwasser Catwalk inverts the sky into an ascending wave of water on the cusp of rolling over our feet onto the balcony. Far off in the distance, an image of the hotel hovers on the horizon line and displaces the original site of the hotel yet again, as if history is repeating itself. Reimer fills the gallery floor with 40 tons of sand and returns the site back into a beach in emulation of Morgan's bold gesture. The installation conflates time and space, where directions are reversed (water hangs over air), inside becomes outside, and present experiences are based on a location's architectural past.

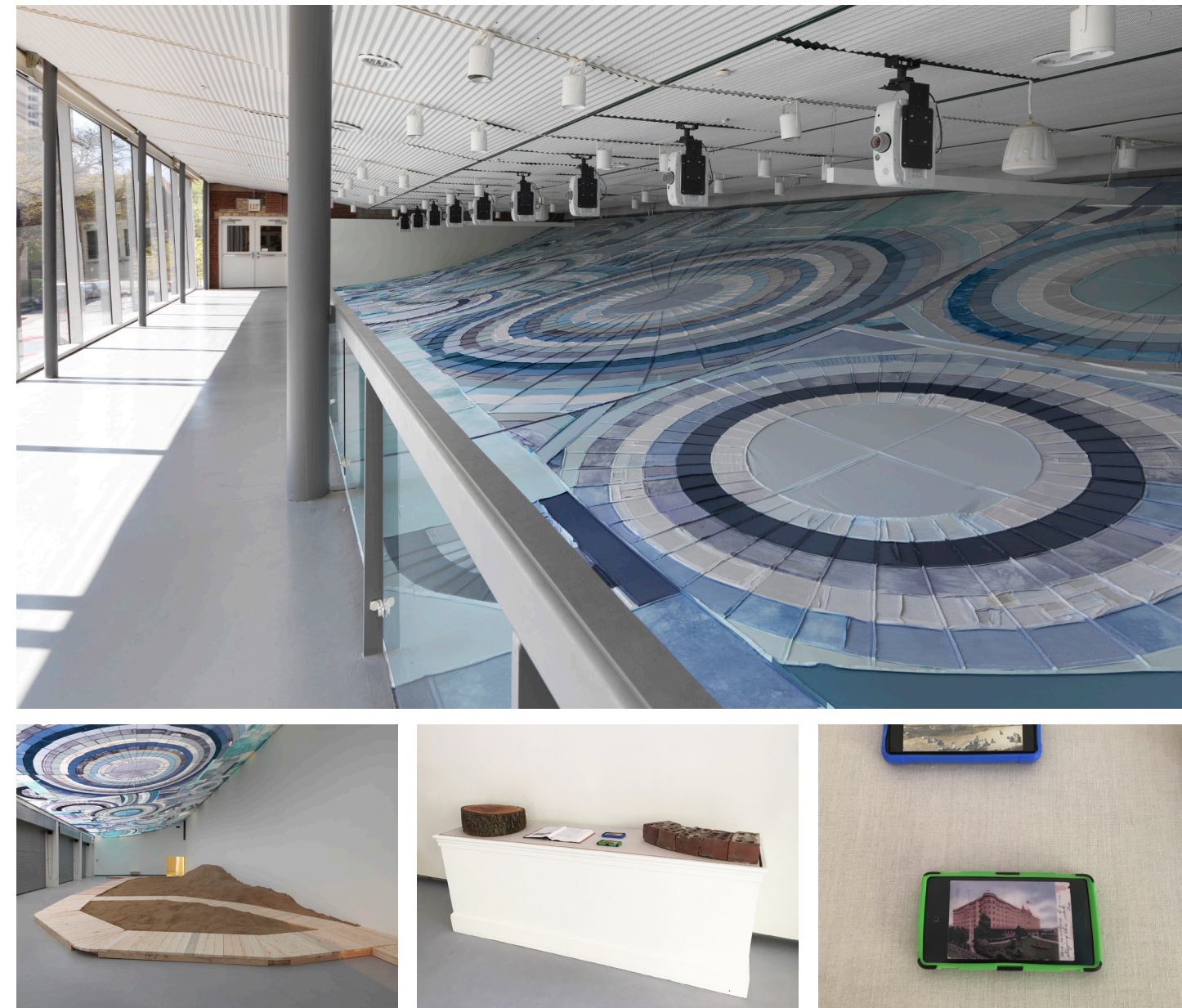
Passage of time is made tangible through the presence of the boardwalk, where Reimer invites us to literally time travel. Guests strolling on the pathways notice that commercially prepared 2x4 inch planks of wood are interrupted by wide segments of locally sourced lumber - honey locust, red oak, birch and pine.

The natural width of the tree was preserved by artist/sawyer Bryan Saner in a recent performance where he hand-milled the reclaimed tree specifically for this installation. Over 100 years old, these trees once shared time and space with the Chicago Beach Hotel and create a pathway that conceptually combines past and present through materiality. By moving our bodies across the boardwalk, we physically inhabit a plot of the past, making us just another layer of time.

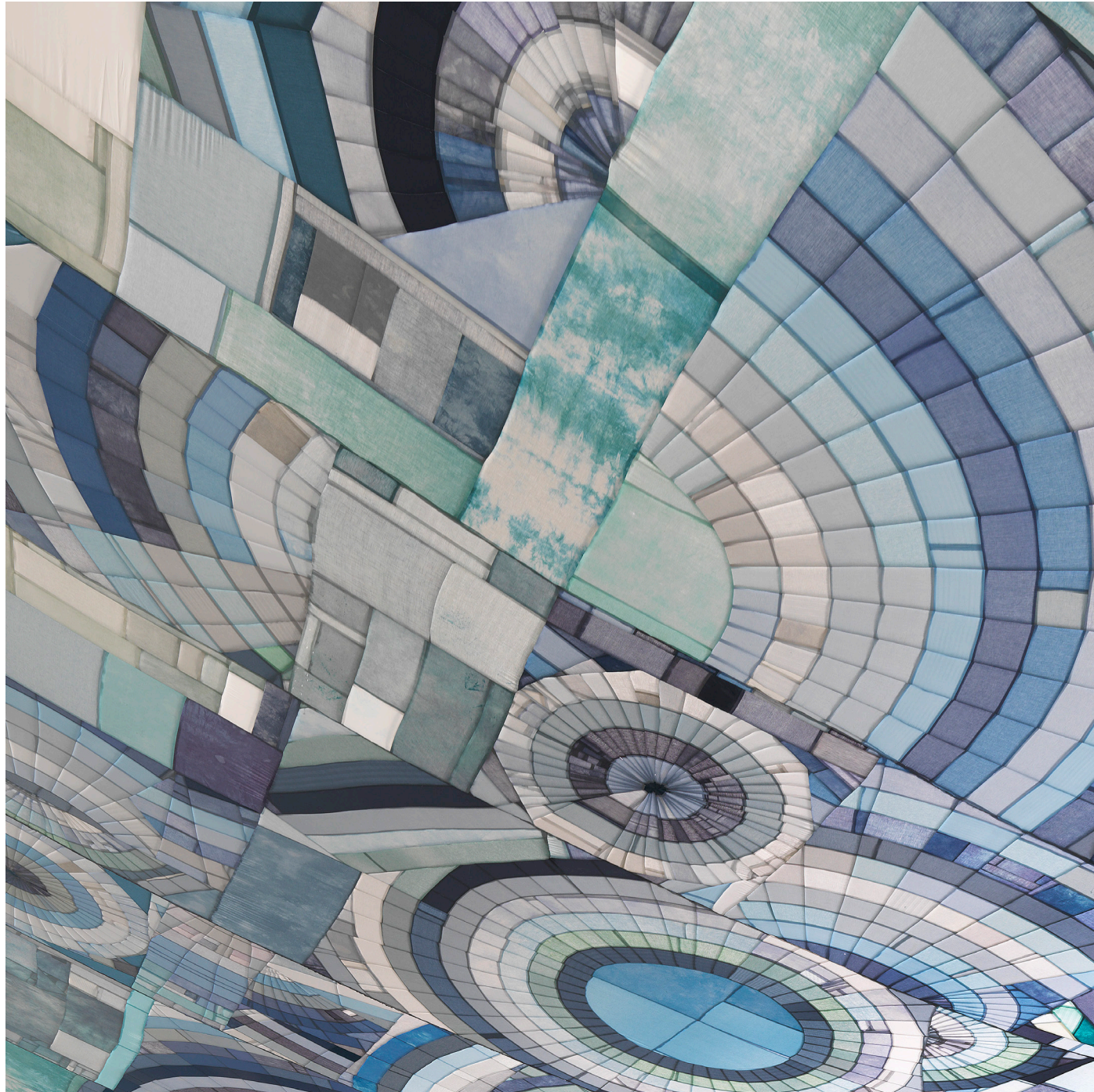
The display case in the gallery holds objects that document time in methods we commonly understand. A slice of a local red oak tree diagrams the radiating lines extending beyond 97 years. The history book *Chicago's Historic Hyde Park* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) verifies the story of the hotel in written form. Peculiarly shaped bricks arranged in an arc are the artifacts previously mentioned that were excavated during the Art Center's reconstruction. When seen from above through a strategic reveal in corner of the canopy, their careful display aligns with the concentric lines in the fabric. Like a natural history museum display that hypothesizes what an ancient cup looked like based on one tiny found fragment, Reimer's arrangement places the bricks in the corner to visualize the tower turrets that rounded the four corners of the Chicago Beach Hotel. Reimer adds to this mix of time-telling two cell phones displaying a vintage postcard of the hotel: Instagram is the new postcard. With one unassuming gesture, she collapses popular modes of communication from opposite ends of a century in effort to translate the human need to hold on to the memory associated with a place.

According to physics, spacetime is the concept that time and space are interwoven in the same continuum instead of existing in separate dimensions. The title of the latest site-specific installation by Karen Reimer, *Shoretime Spaceline*, invokes this mathematical theorem through wordplay and indicates the ideas partially motivating her spectacular arrangement of repurposed materials. Reimer has proven her ability over the years to create large site-specific art installations that make mathematical, scientific or architectural concepts such as the Golden Mean visible and relatable. In 2001 Reimer collaborated with Constance Bacon to create *Cold Comfort*, a site-specific installation that turned the modernist white cube (gallery) into a patchwork soft sculpture at Hyde Park Art Center's previous location in the former Del Prado Hotel, 5307 Hyde Park Blvd. In *Shoretime Spaceline* Reimer reconnects with the previous Art Center site and her career history by repurposing some of the fabric from *Cold Comfort* to create the blue canopy in the current installation. With layer upon layer of histories—personal, cultural, geographical—Reimer invites us to consider what the commingling of past, present and place looks and feels like.

**Allison Peters Quinn**  
Director of Exhibition & Residency Programs







KAREN REIMER (b. 1958, Newton, KS) examines the relationships between beauty, value, and meaning by exploiting the tensions between copy and original, object and process, and fine art and domestic craft. The longtime Chicago artist has been making and exhibiting installations and textile-based 2D work nationally and internationally since the 1990s. Her work has been featured in numerous spaces including the Memphis College of Art, Museum of Contemporary Craft (Portland), Kohler Art Center, De Appel Art Center (Amsterdam) and locally at the Chicago Cultural Center, Gallery 400 (UIC) and Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago) to name a few. Reimer is represented by Monique Meloche Gallery.

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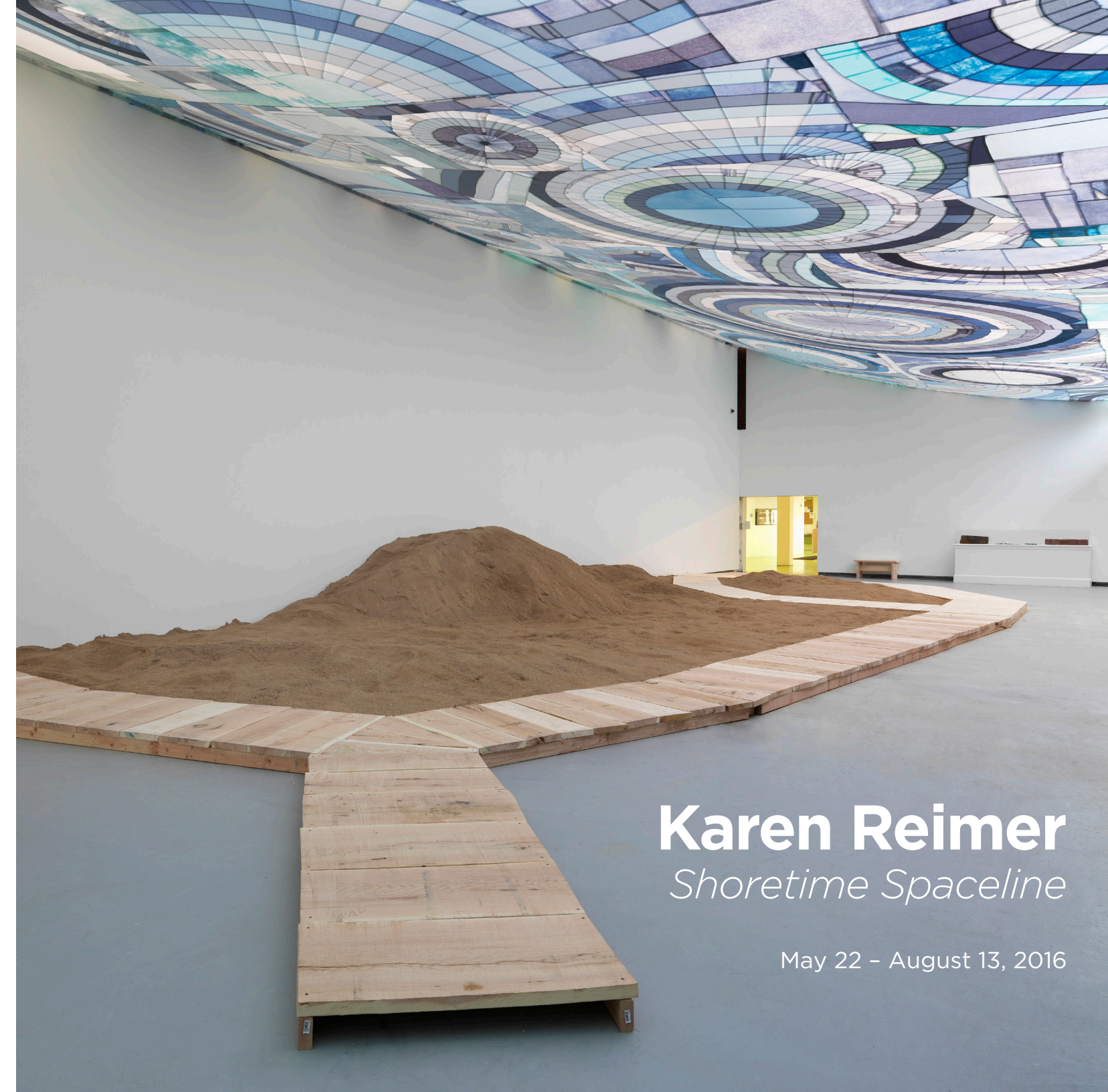
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**Karen Reimer**  
*Shoretime Spaceline*

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