

A+E

A look at how AIDS-related art defined era

Groundbreaking exhibition in Chicago aims to make a case for its lasting influence in the art world.



TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE



ORLIN WAGNER/AP

CHICAGO SPORTS

Winter trades heat up both sides of town

Cubs trade Jorge Soler to Royals for closer Wade Davis, left; Sox get Nationals prospects for Adam Eaton.

Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM



SPENCER PLATT/GETTY

Mayor Rahm Emanuel speaks to the media Wednesday after a meeting with President-elect Donald Trump at Trump Tower in New York.



Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt has fought anti-pollution rules.

Trump chooses oil ally to lead EPA

Opponents cry foul as Pruitt a skeptic of climate change

BY EVAN HALPER
Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — Donald Trump picked Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt to run the Environmental Protection Agency, signaling the president-elect will deliver on his vow to disassemble President Barack Obama's landmark effort to fight climate change.

Pruitt, 48, an ally of the fossil fuel industry, has taken a lead nationally in resisting Obama's environmental agenda. He is an architect of the multistate legal effort to block the administration's sweeping national man-
date for cleaner burning

Emanuel stresses immigration



RICARDO ROSENKRANZ PHOTO

"The Rosenkranz Mysteries" at the Royal George stars Ricardo Rosenkranz, a pediatrician.

IN PERFORMANCE 'The Rosenkranz Mysteries'
★★★ 1/2

Healing power of medicine and magic

Doctor's show connects on story, illusion levels

BY CHRIS JONES
Chicago Tribune

"Medicine is not a transaction," Dr. Ricardo Rosenkranz observes during his truly unusual and immensely likable magic show at the Royal George Cabaret. "It is," he insists, "the unraveling of a really beautiful story."

"Healing," he says, blinking out at his audience, his de-facto medical students, over his spectacles, "actually occurs as our patients' story becomes our own."

I felt a shiver at that moment Sunday afternoon — partly because Rosenkranz was speaking so openly about that which doctors so rarely discuss, the force of empathy. Partly because Rosenkranz was making me think that I really like doctors of this ilk. And partly because Rosenkranz was making the connection between medicine and the performing arts better than I ever heard it made before.

Both rely on a combination of art and science. Both traffic in feeling. Both nibble on the margins of belief. Both are deeply reliant on hope. Both have their charlatans. Both are essential for our dignified ongoing existence.

But the frisson mostly was because Rosenkranz was reminding me that my late father did not have a primary physician who bothered to learn his story. It annoyed me at the time, and as I sat there watching "The Rosenkranz Mysteries," a show that insisted healing meant learning stories, it started to annoy me all over again.

Heady stuff, I know, for a family-friendly entertainment that basically consists of tricks and illusions and is the work of an amateur magician who has made his money elsewhere. Medicine and the theater may be close cousins, but not when it comes to pay scales.

Rosenkranz, a pediatrician who teaches at Northwestern

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TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS

"By Punchinello's Bed" and "The Lamentation" by Patrick Webb are in the "Art AIDS America Chicago" exhibit at the Alphawood Gallery.

Examining impact of AIDS-related art

First major survey of era-defined works makes way to Chicago



STEVE JOHNSON

There are scores of artworks in "Art AIDS America Chicago," the new and groundbreaking exhibition that attempts to survey AIDS-related art and make a case for its lasting influence on the art world.

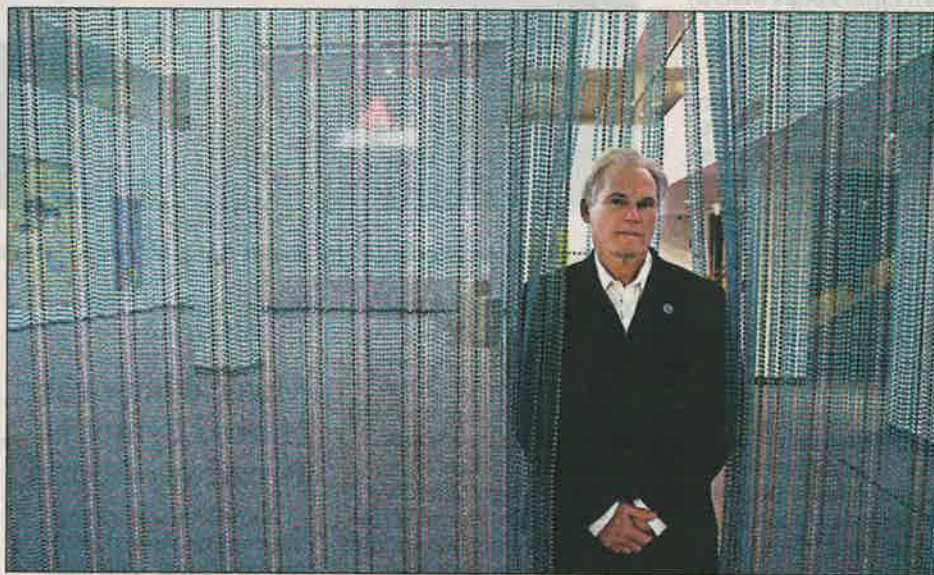
But look closely at the artists' names on the wall cards, and you'll notice a demographic fact that is perhaps not a surprise but soon becomes overwhelming.

Jimmy DeSana, 1949-1990.
Keith Haring, 1958-1990.
Brian Buczak, 1954-1987.
David Cannon Dashiell, 1952-1993.
Roger Brown, 1941-1997.
Felix Gonzalez-Torres, 1957-1996.
Jerome Caja, 1958-1995.

And on it goes. Not exclusively, of course, but to a large degree the show is populated by men who died in their 30s and 40s, sometimes in their 50s, some of them already famous, some of them making work that would bring them to the cusp of fame.

Co-curator Jonathan Katz explicitly does not want this to be a "necrology." He is making an argument that AIDS-related art has helped bring the personal and the political back into art-making that had grown abstract and intellectual. But necrology — a list of deaths — is an inescapable part of the story, as is the feeling the exhibit instills of reliving a traumatic time. Boxes of tissues are placed throughout for a reason.

Almost inconceivably, this is the first such survey to appear in major museums; it debuted at the Tacoma Art Museum in



Jonathan Katz, the exhibit's co-curator, says artists of the early AIDS era sneaked work about homosexuality and AIDS into an art world that wanted to avoid such work.



"Wreath" by Whitfield Lovell is among the exhibit works at the gallery at Fullerton Avenue and Halsted Street in Chicago.

Washington, and its most recent stop before Chicago was at the Bronx Museum of the Arts in New York City.

In Chicago, its last stop, it will be up through April 2 at Alphawood Gallery, a new space at 2401 N. Halsted St. developed specifically for the show by the Alphawood

Foundation, its primary sponsor here. Admission is free, but organizers ask that visitors secure timed entry passes via www.artaidsamericachicago.org.

"It's unique in Chicago to have a major exhibition like this in a temporary space," said James McDonough, the foundation's executive director. "We view it as an act of activism."

Its Chicago run adds not only the name of the city to the exhibition's title but many local works, including an introductory video about AIDS and art in the city. "Art AIDS America Chicago" will be augmented by extensive public programming, everything from panel discussions, artist interviews and artist workshops at the gallery to a public talk on Gonzalez-Torres at the Art Institute and a related exhibition coming in January at the DePaul Art Museum. A full schedule is on the website.

The exhibit around which this activity swirls is potent on its own.

"When we discuss AIDS today — that is, when we deign to mention it at all — it is as a tragic tangent to American history, not as

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VISUAL ARTS

AIDS-related art gets first major survey

AIDS, from Page 1

a generative force," writes Katz, a Chicago gay activist in the 1980s and now an art historian at University of Buffalo, in the exhibition catalog. His take: "Because of AIDS, an entire generation of artists began to think of their representational practices first and foremost strategically."

Artists employed the "camouflaged, clandestine language of the spy" to sneak work about homosexuality and AIDS past the "immune system" of an art world that wanted to avoid such work, Katz contends.

"It is about damn time we named AIDS as a function of American cultural change," he said at the exhibit's Chicago opening last week.

Gonzalez-Torres, the Cuban-American artist, was influential as a theorist, said Katz: "The key, he said, is to go around them ... to make forms of opposition they don't realize are oppositional."

Metaphors abound in the artwork. Buffalo tumbling off of a cliff. Empty beds. Names written in sand. Flowers cut down in their prime. A pewter drainpipe, plugged into a gallery wall. The leather from a San Francisco gym, stripped from its weight bench and presented almost as a funeral shroud. Robert Mapplethorpe's spectral image of a flower's shadow.

There are many more direct works here, too. An enlarged image of HIV-fighting pills. A 1981 painting of Kaposi's sarcoma lesions that Katz believes to be one of the first AIDS artworks. Jenny Holzer's condoms wrapped with text: "Protect me from what I want." A painting depicting sex with a skeleton.



TERRENCE ANTONIO JAMES/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

A visitor views artworks from "Art AIDS America Chicago." The exhibit, which opened last week, will be at the Alphawood Gallery through April 2.

The show includes the first reconstruction, Katz said, of "Let the Record Show," a 1987 installation at New York's New Museum by the collective Gran Fury. It features a pink triangle and the slogan "Silence=Death" in neon above overt criticism of the likes of Jerry Falwell and Jesse Helms.

There is black humor here, but the predominant emotions are anger and anguish. Much of the work addresses directly the nation's ignorance or active suppression of recognition and treatment of AIDS and its related illnesses.

"I don't think you can take it in

in one day," said Chris Benoodt, a Chicago art consultant who toured the show in its opening days. "I'm so pleased to see nationally recognized artists. Not only that, but strong, powerful works."

The artist Karen Finley — who grew up in Evanston — performed a piece at the opening reception and has two installations in the exhibition. At the opening she led a reporter to a set of vintage Chicago photographs that had particularly moved her.

They were portraits of gay African-American men, a range of

types, looking directly at the camera.

"That gazing, I wasn't feeling elsewhere in the exhibit," Finley said.

As she enthused about the photos, standing nearby was an older gentleman with a seemingly proprietary air.

"Are these yours?" Finley asked, indicating the photos.

The man, Patric McCoy, nodded and said he considered himself a collector rather than an artist.

"You are an artist," said Finley. McCoy, a retired EPA worker,

said he had taken these and other photos to teach himself photography and was pleased that curators found them worthy of inclusion in a show that churned up so much history.

"It's intense, because it's making me go back and relive those 20 years," McCoy said of the exhibition. "The scene I was in, (AIDS) almost wiped it out. It's heartening to see that it's progressed and we can have this now. But we wasted 20 years."

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ABEL URIBE/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Shedd Aquarium learning specialist Aidan Mullaney helps Antwan McGee, 11, on Antwan's last day in the Club Shedd program, in which students created enrichment tools for the aquarium's giant Pacific octopus.

Octopus aid: Students design tools for Shedd cephalopod

BY STEVE JOHNSON
Chicago Tribune

The octopus was not cooperating.

Instead of writhing about in its tank, demonstrating for the assembled students its size and movement patterns, the Shedd Aquarium's giant Pacific octopus was just kind of sitting there, up in a corner, a row of tentacles pressed against the glass.

Another thought her tool was just right. "It's the perfect size," she said.

This was the last of 10 after-school sessions for the first group of middle schoolers to participate in the aquarium's Club Shedd program, which has been bringing in 60 high school students a year for an intensive Shedd experience.

During the weekly sessions, the fifth- through eighth-graders

zen Schools Illinois, which is also in the enrichment business. It provides expanded learning to Chicago Public Schools middle schoolers, with an emphasis on the STEM disciplines.

"We find our kids, they aren't going to the museums downtown," said Jeanette Castellanos Butt, executive director of Citizen Schools Illinois. Exposure is key to addressing the "achievement gap" between high- and

SEE IT NOW

MSI has 'Christmas Around the World,' Legos and light

At the center of the Museum of Science and Industry's rotunda stands a 45-foot-tall, floor-to-dome Grand Tree, adorned with more than 30,000 sparkling lights.

This enormous tree is the centerpiece of the museum's annual holiday exhibit, "Christmas Around the World," this year featuring more than 50 decorated trees and displays. Each tree represents a different country or culture, decorated by volunteers from Chicago's diverse communities and offering insight into holiday customs around the world.

New this year are Lego-inspired activities and displays, offered in celebration of "Brick by Brick," the museum's exhibit of monumental Lego structures. Special Lego ornaments made by members of the Chicago Blackhawks, White Sox, Bulls and other Chicago teams and organizations will be on display, and don't forget to look up — Lego versions of international flags are on display high above the exhibit space.

Families can make their own Lego ornaments to take home on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. through Dec. 18.

The Museum's new Holiday Lane space showcases "Holidays of Light," a digital exhibit focusing on Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and other holidays around the world that celebrate light or enlightenment.

Cultural groups will perform

'World's largest snow globe' fills Adler Planetarium theater

If you enjoy special holiday programming but don't have a lot of time or patience to experience it, here's one for you. The "world's largest snow globe" is playing all month in the Adler Planetarium's Grainger Sky Theater, the high-tech domed cinema in the center of the lake-front space museum. As you stay in your seats after one of the regular Grainger presentations this month, you are surrounded by high-resolution images of Chicago landmarks and a bevy of falling snowflakes. It's like being inside a snow globe, minus the moisture and the shaking.

The virtual snow globe is in its fifth year at the Adler. "It's a little holiday bonus," said Mike Smail, theater manager for the planetarium. The snow, he said, is "microscopic photographs, 'micrograph' is the official term for that, these high-resolution, up-close photos of actual snowflakes" borrowed from a colleague at the California Institute of Technology.

"So all of the snowflakes you see are images of actual snowflakes. And then our production team mapped them into the 3-dimensional environment, created this swirling cloud of crystals. We laid that over the background imagery of the city of Chicago" — shot by an Adler astronomer — "to create the illusion that you are sitting in this snow globe, and the snow crystals are swirling around you and filling the scene." At under three minutes long, it's a special holiday