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

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.

ORLIN WAGNER/AP

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-
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's," he insists, "the unraveling of a really beautiful story."

"Healing," he says, blinding 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 me see 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 nudge 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 simulated 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 Medical School, has found a way to make medicine interesting to even the most casual of laypeople. His show at the Royal George Cabaret is a tour de force of magic and medical sleight of hand, a performance that is both entertaining and enlightening.

There are few performers in the world who can make medicine so accessible and so enjoyable. Rosenkranz does it with grace and finesse. His show is a reminder that there is much to be learned from the world of entertainment, and that we can all benefit from the wisdom that can be found in the realm of magic.
AIDS-related art gets first major survey

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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 and from there, strayed cosmically.” Artists employed the “cannibalized, chimeric language of the asp” to sneak work about homosexuality and AIDS past the “-immunological walls of an art world that wanted to avoid such work, Katz continued.”

“It is about damn time we addressed 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. “He felt, he is to go around them— to make forms of opposition they don’t realize are oppositional.”

Metaphors abound in the work. Buffalo tumbling off a cliff. Empty beds. Names written in sand. Flowers cut down in their prime. A poster draping, plugged into a gallery wall. The feeling from a black and white film, stripped from its weight and frame and nailed to a funeral shroud. Robert Longo’s sylvan image of a flower’s shadow.

There are many more direct works here, too. An enlarged image of HIV-fighting pills. A 1991 photo of NAP’s Armistice.”

Katz believes one of the first AIDS artworks Jenny Holzer is a work titled “Protect me from what I want.” A painting depicting sex with a skeleton.

The show includes the first reconstruction, Katz said, of “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 over écrit credit 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 one day!” said Chris Benoff, a Chicago art consultant who toured the show in its opening days. “I’ve 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.

“Just gazing, I wasn’t feeling anywhere in the exhibit,” Finley said.

As she enthused about the physical ordering nearby was an older gentleman with a seemingly proffering air.

“Aren’t these yours?” Finley asked, indicating the photos.

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

“You are an artist,” said Finley, a retired EPA worker, who said he had taken these and other photos to teach himself photog-

“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 Gruener Sky Theater. The high-tech dome is located in the center of the Indiana Dunes Planetarium theater. This year, the show is called “Brick by Brick,” the museum’s exhibit of monumental Lego structures. Special Lego ornaments made by members of the Chicago Lego club will be on display, and the exhibit space will be decorated 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 1,000 decorated trees and displays. Each tree represents a different country of 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 Lego club will be on display, and the exhibit space will be decorated with more than 30,000 sparkling lights.

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

The museum’s new Holiday Lane space showcases “Holiday Days of Light,” a digital exhibit focusing on Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and other holidays around the world that celebrate light or enlightenment.

The show will run through Jan. 14, 2017.