FALL 2020: CHICAGO ARTS IN THE PANDEMIC

Plenty of museum shows worth seeing this fall

Monet, early Frank Lloyd Wright are among offerings

By Steve Johnson

It's not a full slate, as we would have seen in previous, pandemic-free Chicago autumns.

But from Claude Monet to two big new Chicago art showcases to a look at early Frank Lloyd Wright, there's enough going on in Chicago museums and visual arts to make one more than a little bit excited about new happenings. That is a strange feeling of this moment in history, but I kind of remember it from before, and — yes — I like it.

There's even a bit of breaking news here about text-based artist Jenny Holzer's first augmented reality work at the University of Chicago this fall.

Pay attention to news from the institutions you're interested in because the situation is, to say the least, dynamic. And remember that several fine shows from the spring have been held over and extended, including the Ruth Bader Ginsburg exhibit at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and "Apsaalooke: Women and Warriors" at the Field Museum.

But here are 11 currently scheduled new exhibitions and events before the end of the year that I'm looking forward to seeing:

"Renaissance Invention?" Recently reopened, the Newberry Library is mounting this innovative, three-institution look at new discoveries as envisioned in the late 16th century. Adler Planetarium astronomical instruments and Art Institute armor is shown off alongside the library's edition of Johannes Stradanus's widely influential print series "Nova Reperta (New Discoveries)," which "celebrates the marvels of the age," the Newberry says. Through Nov. 25, Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St.; 312-943-9090 or newberry.org.

"Artists Run Chicago 2.0?" A showcase for contemporary thinking about art and the ways independent organizations help creativity thrive, this recently opened exhibition spotlights 50 artist-run spaces from across the city and into the suburbs.

It's a callback to the 2009 "Artists Run Chicago" show, and, fascinatingly, only a handful of the groups from then are back. In "2.0," there's something to look at on virtually every wall of the Hyde Park Art Center, from a 25-square-inch gallery located inside a clutch to a 10-by-20-foot wall of toilet paper rolls on holders that predated the pandemic. Through Nov. 1, 5020 S. Cornell Ave.; hydeparkart.org.

"Monet and Chicago"/"The Flowers of Monet": The postponed-from-spring Art Institute look at Claude Monet's considerable ties to Chicago has finally debuted. Since last weekend, "Monet and Chicago" — now with more space in the galleries than originally planned — has been offering visitors to the reopened museum a chance to commune with the revered French Impressionist. Presciently, Chicago exhibitions showed Monet four times between 1888 and 1895, and the Tribune wrote about an 1888 exhibition, "Why go to Paris since Paris has come to Chicago?"

Meanwhile, Garfield Park Conservatory has reopened its outdoor gardens to show off asters, dahlias, nasturtiums, roses and more in "The Flowers of Monet in the Artist's Garden." "Monet and Chicago," through Jan. 18, $7 upcharge and visitors will be queued virtually for controlled capacity, Art Institute, 111 S. Michigan Ave.; (312) 443-3600 or artic.edu. "Flowers," opened Sept. 5, $5 timed-entry ticket required, Garfield Park Conservatory, 300 N. Central Park Ave.; www.garfieldconservatory.org/visit.

Elmhurst Art Museum: It's hard to pick among the three recently reopened exhibits at the elegant small museum in the near western suburbs (that's easily accessible via Metra.) "A Space Problem" shows off mid-century furniture and decor in an ideal setting; the museum's Mies van der Rohe-designed McCormick House. "Art in the Post" treats current events, postcard artwork from the community about topics including COVID-19 and racial injustice. "Wright Before the 'Lloyd,'" curated by Chicago cultural historian Tim Samuelson, looks at early work from the iconic architect. Through Nov. 15 ("Space"); Nov. 22 ("Art") and Jan. 3 ("Wright.") 150 S. Cottage Hill Ave, Elmhurst; elmhurstartmuseum.org.

"Jako Trojly: Don't Forget to Pack a Lunch!: The Florida artist, the mixed-race son of mixed-race parents, gets his first solo show in Chicago, and from the look and sound of things, it'll be both challenging and rewarding.

"He deals candidly, often humorously, with this sense of otherness in his paintings while remaining aware that as an artist he's both exploring and exploiting it," Tampa Bay's Creative Loafing newspaper wrote about him in 2018. Sept. 12 - Oct. 31, Monique Meloche Gallery, 451 N Paulina St.; (312) 243-2129 or monquereloche.com.

"A Tale of Today: Nate Young and Mika Horibuchi": Chicago sculptor Young adorns impeccably crafted wood cabinets, frames and vitrines in order to conduct an inquisition into his family's past. Chicago artist Horibuchi, the MCA wrote about a 2018 exhibition of hers, "is interested in tricks and slips in visual perception. The curtains, window blinds and optical illusions she uses as subjects often conceal as much as they reveal."

Postponed from spring, their joint installation at the Driehaus Museum will be the gilded age mansion's second show placing contemporary art amid its opulent rooms. Opens Sept. 26, 40 E. Erie St.; driehausmuseum.org or (312) 482-8933.

"YOU BE MY ALLY": The first augmented reality work in the U.S. by renowned text-based artist Jenny Holzer will be viewable on the University of Chicago's Hyde Park campus this fall and via app and, at times, on the nearby streets.

Commissioned by the university, the main work consists of excerpts from the school's Core Curriculum that people can project from their phones onto walls. Oct. 5- late November. An information page is expected to be live by Sept. 10 at jennyholzer.uchicago.edu.

"The Long Dream": Organized as the MCA readjusted its priorities and trimmed its budget in response to the pandemic, this show, the museum says, will showcase "emerging and established artists" from Chicago as selected by the whole of the museum's curatorial team.

Labels will be written "in collaboration with youth groups and civic voices" and works will treat "race, anxiety, historical injustice and artistic exploration." Opens Nov. 7, 220 E. Chicago Ave.; (312) 280-2660 or mcachicago.org.

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