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Prints take center stage at 2 exhibits

By Lauren Viera, Tribune reporter

August 20, 2010

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Chances are, unless you're a curious resident of the Ukrainian Village or have a keen interest in Polish artists, you haven't visited the Polish Museum of America.

Let "Hidden Treasures" be your excuse. Four years in the making, the exhibition of prints is culled from the 75-year-old museum's permanent collection, which is phenomenal.

Curator Monika Nowak organized the 120-piece exhibit by sifting through stacks, piles and flat files of works collecting dust in the museum's storage areas. The exhibit's name, she says, is quite literal: In the process of pulling prints (the museum has more than 1,000 in its collection), Nowak came across a painting by a popular Polish artist, wedged between

two empty frames. The price tag? \$4,000.

"Hidden Treasures" comprises drawings, lithographs, woodblock-cuts, engravings; there are no sweeping watercolor landscapes or thickly painted portraits. By contrast, almost every work here seems dark or somber, more realistic than idyllic. Perhaps it's a sign of the times: The years represented here span from the 1920s through the 1990s, but the most striking works are from the mid- to late-1930s, including several executed for or during from the New York World's Fair of 1939-40.

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Adam Bunsch, whose woodcut print of fledgling birds ("Piskleta," 1936) is featured on the exhibit's postcard, has a knack for delicate, adorable illustrations, a few of which are included here. Maria Werten's contributions, dating to the 1920s, are rooted in folk art and transcend all those decades to still look fresh. Jerzy Panek, one of the better known artists in this show, has a definitively simple style. Abstract line drawings such as "Beczaca Koza" ("Beczaca goat") and "Proba Portretu Jozefa Gielniaka IV" ("Attempted portrait of Jozefa Gielniaka IV") are classic examples of 1960s modern minimalism.

Darker cityscapes and a handful of haunting portraits line the exterior of this show, fleshing out a fascinating history of rarely seen artists. Apparently, four years was worth the wait.

"Hidden Treasures" at Polish Museum of America, 984 N. Milwaukee Ave., 773-384-3352; [polishmuseumofamerica.org](#); through Aug. 29.

'Twenty Summers' at Chicago Printmakers Collaborative

When Cleveland native Deborah Lader made the decision in the late 1980s to move to Chicago, thinking it would be good for her burgeoning art career, she failed to secure one detail: a place to make prints.

So, she founded one.

Twenty summers later, the Chicago Printmakers Collaborative is celebrating its longevity with a comprehensive show of local printmakers past and present, some of whom still pay monthly dues and many of whom have moved on to successful careers.

Pinned to the walls surrounding the Lincoln Square studio's massive equipment are handmade paper relics, some of them monotypes (one of a kind), some of them plucked from oddly numbered editions — reason being that in printmaking, nothing is sacred. Misjudge your registration (the lining up of multiple ink cartridges or screens), and your art is as good as scrap paper.

Lean in close, and it's hard to believe some of these prints were made by a human hand. Hiroshi Ariyana, whose cityscape silkscreens are based on photographs snapped around town, perfectly lines up six

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screens in his "Loop" to flesh out light and shadow. Nichole Maury, whose portfolio ranges from muted patterns to colorful illustrations, used 15 or 16 screens, Lader says, to produce the bright, mouth-watering slice of cake on display.

"Twenty Summers: Chicago Printmakers Collaborative's 20th Anniversary Summer Show" at Chicago Printmakers Collaborative, 4642 N. Western Ave., 773-293-2070; chicagoprintmakers.com; through Aug. 28.

Carrie Gundersdorf at Julius Caesar and MCA

Seldom do we see the same local artist in two exhibitions at once. When it happens, it's for a reason.

If her two current shows are any indication, 30-something Carrie Gundersdorf, simultaneously exhibited at [Garfield Park](#) collective Julius Caesar and the Museum of Contemporary Art's "12x12: New Artists/New Work" series, is dancing on the line between emerging artistdom and museum-ready.

At Julius Caesar, we're privy to Gundersdorf's process. Framed collages of found scraps of paper document cosmic snapshots (the artist's obsession) that look like two-dimensional brainstorms. According to a Julius Caesar representative, Gundersdorf's studio is crowded with secondhand books procured for their astronomical imagery. "Saturn's rings," "The Sun" and "Aurora Borealis (Red)" are aptly titled collages of eerily similar images, pasted side by side in neat patterns.

With the simplest of materials (crayon, colored pencils, watercolors), Gundersdorf translates her collages into drawings. At the MCA, "Diagonal composition with laser lemon" prettily portrays in pastel what has likely been instilled on the artist's retina from hours of poring over strangers' photographs. "Trails and space, blended version" paints light rays as matchsticks, in the artist's self-proclaimed "5th grade science project" style. Which, in Gundersdorf's hands, isn't a bad thing.

Carrie Gundersdorf, "The bottom of photos that look up at the sky and other observations," at Julius Caesar, 3311 W. Carroll Ave., 312-725-6084; juliuscaesarchicago.com; through Aug. 29; "12x12: Carrie Gundersdorf" at Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave., 312-280-2660; mca.org; through Aug. 29.

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