

Reviews

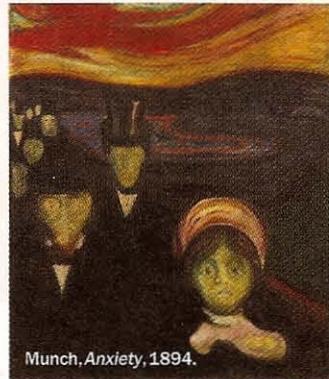
"Becoming Edvard Munch"

★★★★★

Art Institute of Chicago, through Apr 26 (see Museums & Institutions).

Why would the Art Institute, of all places, mount a huge retrospective of Edvard Munch, the Norwegian artist (1863–1944) whose *Scream* launched a thousand inflatable tchotchkes? We can answer the question in one word: prints. They're the most fascinating pieces in this show, and many come from the Art Institute's own collection. (The museum borrowed most of the other paintings and works on paper from Norway; there are about 150 in all.) Munch's interest in sex and loneliness, his use of flat, vivid areas of color, the puzzle-like way he fits his woodcuts together and his incorporation of the wooden blocks' grain into some of his images make his prints seem innovative for today—not just the turn of the 20th century.

The ways in which disturbing works like *The Scream* (on view as a lithograph) have warped our perceptions of Munch inspired the show's subtitle, "Influence, Anxiety, and Myth." Curator Jay Clarke demonstrates that the artist's supposed "neurasthenia" was to some extent a marketing ploy: He studies in Paris and makes serviceable



Munch, *Anxiety*, 1894.

Impressionist paintings until he taps into darker themes, reinventing the cheerful urban flaneurs he borrowed from Caillebotte as the staring, green-faced procession in *Anxiety* (pictured).

We admit that *Madonna*—a mesmerizing lithograph of a femme fatale encircled by swimming sperm and accompanied by a pissed-off fetus—is bizarre. But the works by Munch's French, German and Scandinavian contemporaries whom Clarke includes in the show prove the artist and his peers addressed the same theme: fear that rapid social change leads to decadence and alienation. Munch just did it better.—*LW*

"PhotoDimensional"

★★★★★

Museum of Contemporary Photography, through Apr 19 (see Museums & Institutions).

The MoCP has spent the past several years investigating photography in the context of other media, i.e. performance art, painting and video. Now it's sculpture's turn.

Most of "PhotoDimensional"'s artists make photos about sculpture—often with curious twists on one of photography's traditional roles, the documentation of sculpture. Others literally make sculptures out of photos. Katalin Deér's *Tabletop* (2008), a photo of a sculptural object, which the artist has cemented onto a concrete table, assumes iconic status in bringing both of the show's threads together. (Some of these pieces would be inaccessible without the wall text, which is clear and helpful but not pedantic or juvenile.)

Curator Karen Irvine's particular interest in the limits of spatial representation yields two of the cleverest works on display. Taking disaster photos from the news as her source material, Chicago artist Heather Mekkelson re-creates the images' debris in the gallery. Her



Hoffman, *La Ronde*, 2004.

sculptures confront visitors with the gravity of those situations in ways the flat images can't. Bettina Hoffmann freezes people in domestic scenes and twirls a video camera around them—capturing angles in her video *La Ronde* (pictured) that elude the monovision of still photographs.

Pello Irazu retouches his photos of chairs and boxes so that viewers can't reconcile the space these objects seem to occupy with reality. True, Irazu engages a theme that's been around since the early 20th century, but his well-executed work has plenty of aesthetic appeal. While the show doesn't break any new art-historical ground, it doesn't make any grand claims, either: It's simply a comprehensive, carefully assembled look at its subject.—*Jonathan Kinkley*

Listings

If you want to be listed

Submit information by mail, e-mail (art@timeoutchicago.com) or fax (312-924-9350) to **Lauren Weinberg**. Include details of event, dates, times, address of venue with cross streets, nearest El station and bus routes, telephone number and admission price, if any. **Deadline is noon Thursday, two weeks before publication date.** Incomplete submissions will not be included, and listings information will not be accepted over the phone. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

How to use this section

The following is a selection of this week's exhibitions and events. For more museums, see the Around Town section.

- * Recommended or notable
- Reviewed in this issue
- ◄ Cheap

Museums & Institutions

Art Center in Highland Park

FREE 1957 Sheridan Rd, Highland Park (847-432-1888, theartcenterhp.org). *Metra: Union Pacific N to Highland Park. Mon–Fri 9am–4pm, Sat 9am–3pm.*

* **"For a Limited Time Only."** As their works deteriorate or completely disintegrate over the course of the show, five artists including Shawn Stucky and Annie Heckman explore "the ephemeral nature of art." Curator Olga Stefan supplies an edible catalog. Opens Fri 6, 6:30–9pm. Through Mar 28.

Art Institute of Chicago

111 S Michigan Ave at Adams St (312-443-3600, artica.edu/aic). *El: Red, Blue to Jackson; Orange, Green, Pink, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Adams. Bus: 3, X3, 4 (24hrs), X4, 6, 14, 26, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151 (24hrs), 157. Metra: Elec Main to Millennium Station. Mon–Fri 10:30am–5pm; Thu 10:30–8pm; Sat, Sun 10am–5pm. \$12; seniors, students and kids \$7; kids under 12 free. Thursdays 5–8pm free.*

* **"The Beauty of the Beasts: Artists and Their Pets in 20th-Century Art."** The Ryerson Library compiles an "aw"-inspiring assortment of books that highlight four-legged muses. Closed Sundays. Through Mar 16.

* **"Soaring Peaks, Lofty Spirits."** Mountains inspired these Chinese paintings from the past 400 years, which convey varying degrees of action and repose. Through Apr 12.

► **"Becoming Edvard Munch: Influence, Anxiety and Myth."** Feel like you want to *Scream*? You'll appreciate the Norwegian artist's 150 rarely seen paintings and drawings. This exhibition requires a special ticket. Through Apr 26.

* **"Yousuf Karsh: Regarding Heroes."**

A hundred iconic images from the late Canadian photographer's 60-year career include famous portraits of Winston Churchill, Audrey Hepburn and Albert Einstein. Through Apr 26.

Arts Club of Chicago

FREE 201 E Ontario St at St. Clair St (312-787-3997). *El: Red to Chicago. Bus: 3, 10, 26, 66, 125, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151 (24hrs). Mon–Fri 11am–6pm.*

"Sigmar Polke: Lens Paintings."

Polke's one of Germany's most important postwar artists, but these 34 paintings aren't as groundbreaking as we'd hoped. This series, which Polke began in 2006, mimics lenticulars: pictures that "magically" change as you alter your vantage point. But the corrugated plastic sheets Polke incorporates into his works create distortions with no sense of movement. Though some pieces display the artist's trademark talent for combining interesting images, most seem shallow—despite their layers of unusual materials. Through Apr 17.—*Lauren Weinberg*

Chicago Cultural Center

FREE 77 E Randolph St at Michigan Ave (312-744-9350, chicagoculturalcenter.org). *El: Red to Lake; Orange, Pink, Green, Brown, Purple (rush hrs) to Randolph. Bus: 3, X3, 4 (24hrs), X4, 6, 10, 14, 26, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151 (24hrs), 157. Metra: Elec Main to Millennium Station. Mon–Thu 8am–7pm; Fri 8am–6pm; Sat 9am–6pm; Sun 10am–6pm.*

* **"Two Lithuanian Printmakers: Egle Vertelkaite & Birute Zokaityte."** Both artists fuse traditional and contemporary printmaking techniques to comment on women's issues. Through Mar 29.

* **"William Conger: Paintings 1958–2008."** The seventysomething Chicago artist's first major retrospective makes you wonder what he could do with another 50 years. Conger's 60-plus, mostly large-scale works suggest he's one of the 20th century's great American painters. His commitment to Abstract Expressionism has never wavered—but his signature vivid colors, geometric forms and allusions to real-world phenomena have constantly evolved. Through Mar 29.—*Kathryn Born*

* **"Collaborative Vision: The Poetic Dialogue Project."** Teams of artists and poets collaborated on these paintings, photographs, sculptures, artists' books and installations that integrate text and images. The project was coordinated by Chicago artist Beth Shadur. Through Apr 5.

* **"Robert Davis + Michael**

Langlois: House of the Rising Sun." Nostalgia suffuses the Chicago- and Brooklyn-based duo's four-piece suite: Davis and Langlois tap into teen horniness in Babylon, filling every square inch of the large, blue-tinted painting with enough nude babes, twining vegetation, sumo wrestlers and interspecies couplings for several 1970s rock posters. *Dads* reproduces two *Brady Bunch*-era photographs of the artists' fathers. These works suggest that longing for the past can hold us back, but *Face of God's* cheerful, abstract depiction of the sun concludes the show with optimism. Through Apr 5.—*Amy Schroeder*

* **"Scott Wolniak: Ungrey: Color, Light and Other Balms."** Wolniak attempts to cheer chilled Chicagoans with a multimedia installation that simultaneously mocks and emulates alternative healing practices such as rhythmic breathing, light and color therapies, and aura cleansing. Through Apr 5.

Chicago Tourism Center

FREE 72 E Randolph St at Garland Ct (312-744-6630). *El: Red to Lake; Blue to Washington; Orange, Green, Brown, Pink, Purple (rush hrs) to Randolph. Bus: 3, 4 (24hrs), 14, 124, 145, 157. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm; Sun 10am–4pm.*

* **"The Exquisite City."** More than 70 artists constructed this cardboard metropolis, which bears a striking resemblance to Chicago. Through Mar 15.

City Gallery in the Historic Water Tower

FREE 806 N Michigan Ave at Chicago Ave (312-742-0808). *El: Red to Chicago. Bus: 66, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 151 (24hrs). Mon–Sat 10am–6:30pm; Sun 10am–5pm.*

* **"Colleen Plumb: Animals are Outside Today."** Plumb's unsettling