

Chicago Tribune

Ten reasons to get excited about the winter art season

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A still life by Sam Taylor-Johnson (Courtesy White Cube)

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I love the snow, but maybe you don't. Maybe you'd rather be indoors looking at art in rooms with sophisticated humidity and temperature control than out enjoying the formal and experiential brilliance of a radically transformed landscape. If so, here are some possibilities:

"Ground Floor": Everybody needs to get in somewhere. The Center's mammoth first-story gallery is as good as anywhere else, often better. In its third iteration, this biennial of emerging local talent features work by recent

graduate students from Chicago's finest MFA programs, selected by a star jury. Expect fraught teen photographs from Evan Baden, laboriously performed domestic politics from Hannah Barco and thoughtful communitarianism from Daniel Tucker, among others. December 12-March 22, Hyde Park Art Center, 5020 S. Cornell Ave., 773-324-5520, hydeparkart.org

"Lands End": In an era of unending geographical controversies and climatological disaster, quaint rolling hills no longer accurately represent the landscape. Artists Zach Cahill and Katherine Harvath curate this cleverly titled show to examine how Hans Haacke, Susan Hiller, Dan Peterman and a dozen others have altered the landscape genre while contending with contemporary realities. January 9-March 15, Logan Center, 915 E. 60th St., 773-702-2787, arts.uchicago.edu/rev-a-and-david-logan-center-arts

"Visibility Machines": Today unmanned drones wage war and surveillance cameras monitor every street corner — and that's just what we know the technology of images to be capable of. Revealing what we don't was the life work of the late German filmmaker Harun Farocki, as it is of the American photographer Trevor Paglen. Though separated by three generations and two continents, they were meant to be exhibited in tandem. January 16 to March 7, Gallery 400, 400 South Peoria St., 312-996-6114, gallery400.uic.edu

"Jaime Davidovich: Outreach 1974-1984": The promise of cable television, as understood by media artists of the '70s, has long gone the way of Monday Night Football. But as TV becomes remade through digital streaming, the forgotten Argentine artist Jaime Davidovich, a pioneer of artist-made television, deserves a rewind. Jan. 23-March 21 at Threewalls, 119 N. Peoria St., 312-432-3972, three-walls.org

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"Alison Ruttan: If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail": In her tripartite study of human aggression, Ruttan moves from primal instincts to national ones. It all ends in death, dismemberment and misery. A photo and video series reenact a chimpanzee war observed by Jane Goodall; ceramics reconstruct buildings bombed in Beirut; and hundreds of cast clay vehicles model the Gulf War's Highway of Death. January 24-April 26, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington St., 312-744-6630, cityofchicago.org/dcace

"You and Me": German duo Oliver Sieber and Katja Stuke tell the story of Indira, an immigrant who fled the Bosnian War and was the Sieber family housekeeper in Dusseldorf before moving to Chicago. Photographs taken in Germany, Bosnia and the U.S. will be exhibited together with family photos and personal ephemera to give an account at once individual and political. January 26-March 22, Museum of Contemporary Photography, 600 S. Michigan Ave., 312-663-5554, <http://www.mocp.org>

"Rooted in Soil": Organized by a curator and her environmental scientist daughter, this group show concerns our earth, with and without a capital E. Artists Claire Pentecost, Sally Mann, Jenny Kendler and a dozen others document large-scale farming practices and controlled prairie fires, propose environmental burial suits and soil tinctures, create an immersive terrarium and papyrus from beets, and more. January 29-April 26, DePaul Art Museum, 935 W. Fullerton Ave., 773-325-7506, museums.depaul.edu

"The Sky Is Falling. The Money's All Gone": Alternative schooling is all the rage, no more so than now, when bloated MFA programs promise debt alongside enlightenment (or at least professional credentials). Lucky Pierre Free University, an initiative of local artist collaborative Lucky Pierre, enters the pedagogical fray with a seminar and exhibition meant to creatively address environmental and economic collapse. January 30-April 4, Mana Contemporary, Room 420, 2233 S. Throop St., luckypierre.org

"Doris Salcedo": Old armoires, white cotton shirts and overturned tables may not seem like the stuff out of which an artist could craft searing, indelible memorials to unforgivable crimes of war. And yet, by filling them with concrete, impaling them with steel rebar and planting them with blades of grass, Doris Salcedo has. The MCA gives the Colombian master her due with a 30-year retrospective. February 21-May 24, Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave., 312-280-2660, mcachicago.org

"Clemens von Wedemeyer": The three stories that make up von Wedemeyer's film installation each took place at a former Benedictine monastery in one of its previous incarnations: Nazi concentration camp, girls' reformatory, psychiatric clinic. Shown simultaneously on triangulated screens, with the same actors playing different roles in different eras, "Muster (Rushes)" disrupts the narrative ease of historical reenactment with the horror of historical reoccurrence. February 21-July 26, Museum of Contemporary Art, 220 E. Chicago Ave., 312-280-2660, mcachicago.org