

ART

Oakton creates artful collection

By MYRNA PETLICKI

The William A. Koehnline Gallery, an expansive sculpture park, and stunning works of art hanging throughout the school make the Des Plaines campus of Oakton Community College an art-lover's paradise.

Another exciting display of artwork has been quietly growing at Oakton's Ray Hartstein Campus in Skokie during the past three years.

Join us as we tour with gallery manager and curator Nathan Harpaz.

"We have installed two permanent exhibitions," Harpaz said. "Both tell the story of Chicago printmaking."

Yardbird is the word

Enter the main door, turn to your left and head down the corridor of the building's "C" wing to learn about "The Plucked Chicken Press."

"That's the story about one of the most prominent lithography studios that we had here in the Chicago area," Harpaz said.

The press was founded in the 1980s in West Virginia by artist and beat poet Will Petersen and his artist wife, Cynthia Archer. Later, the Chicago native moved his studio back to his hometown, then to Evanston, where it stayed in operation until his death in 1994.

"He was a master printer with incredible technical knowledge in printmaking and lithography," Harpaz said. "Besides producing his own work, a group of prominent Chicago artists came to his studio to produce their lithographs because of the high quality."

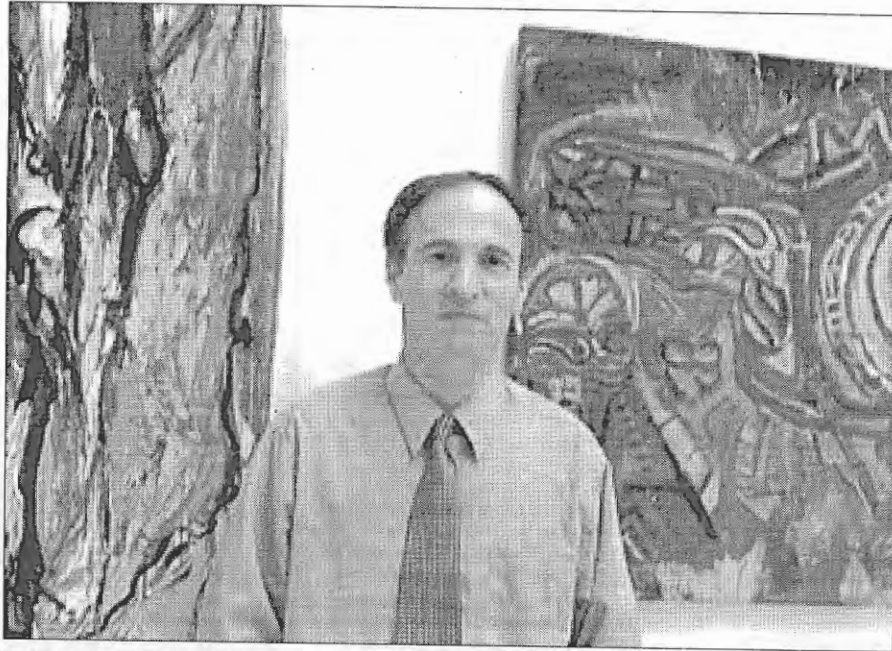
The exhibit begins with photos of Petersen at work and of his studio, plus the history of the studio, the biography of the artist and an explanation of how the Plucked Chicken logo evolved.

The exhibit includes numerous examples of Petersen's work through the years, starting with a print from 1951, when he had just begun his career and was influenced by Cubism, up through 1994, when he died. It shows the evolution of his technique, as well as the way in which his art was influenced by Petersen's having lived and worked in Japan for eight years.

A glass case contains copies of all six issues of the journal that was the genesis of the Plucked Chicken Press. As you proceed down the corridor, you see pieces by artists that trusted Petersen to create exemplary prints of their diverse work. These include John Himmelfarb, Winifred Godfrey, David Driesbach, Richard Hunt, Jim McCormick, Don Weygandt, Carl Hayano, Tom Nakashima, Margo Hoff, Harold Gregor and Martyl.

WPA art for Russian Jews

Head back past the main lobby and over to the "A" wing, outside of the multipurpose room, to see the other



Oakton Community College art gallery manager and curator Nathan Harpaz.

Two permanent exhibitions...tell the story of Chicago print making.

Nathan Harpaz



A woodcut by Aaron Bohrod from the permanent exhibition "A Gift to Biro-Bidjan: Chicago, 1937."

permanent collection, "A Gift to Biro-Bidjan: Chicago, 1937."

"It's part of the history of woodcuts during the Depression time," Harpaz said. The pieces by 14 Chicago WPA (Works Progress Administration) artists were created as a fund-raising project for the Jewish autonomous region in the Soviet Union.

Pieces include Abraham Weiner's takeoff on Grant Wood's "American Gothic" and a Bernece Berkman woodcut inspired by Picasso's "Guernica."

Edward Millman's contribution features many shoes "that symbolize the homeless," Harpaz said. "And the wandering people that are looking for a homeland."

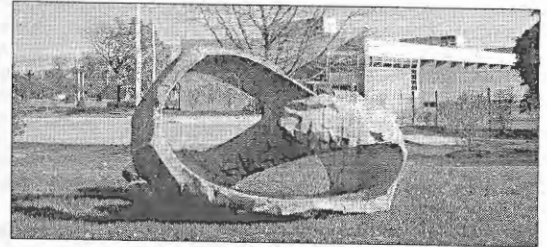
Alex Topchevsky's woodcut is called "Exodus from Germany."

"It's still 1937, and they're already predicting what will happen later," Harpaz said. "There's a lot of history

Godfrey floral oil painting called "White Lilies."

Climbing the stairs to the second floor, and entering the "C" wing, brings you to an exhibit of American Realism, featuring figurative drawings and landscapes. Included are works by Raphael Soyer (etching), Didier Nolet (two small landscapes), Fritz Scholder (Southwest theme), a large landscape by George Atkinson (currently on loan to another gallery) and Fred Jones (pastel prairie climate study), with other pieces being added.

The "A" wing of the second floor is dedicated to abstract and contemporary art. Included are works by James Elton Krauss, Corey M. Postiglione, Salvador Dali (lithograph), Ed Paschke, Richard Hunt, John Pitman Weber (grid containing social justice symbols), John Daniel Callaghan, Shoshannah Hofmann, Douglas Warner and others including



A steel and concrete piece by Peter Lundberg is part of the college's permanent sculpture garden.

behind each piece."

Moving back down the main corridor, just outside the cafeteria you see a typical Winifred

a piece on fabric by Nicholas Krushenik.

"He is considered a 20th Century American master," Harpaz said.

Go back downstairs and out the main exit to get to the newest addition to the Skokie campus's growing sculpture garden - an unnamed stainless steel and granite piece by Chicago artist Joe Agati.

The other four large sculptures are arranged so that they are visible from Lincoln Avenue. Jim Gallucci's "Symphonic Gate," with its musical symbols, seems to beckon viewers to enter.

Ann Melanie's wood and steel "Tier" rises to majestic heights.

Gracing the entrance to the parking lots is Michael Dunbar's "Sweet Melissa," distinctive because it seems to alter in shape as you walk around it.

This concludes our tour.

By early next year, a self-guided tour brochure will be available for navigating the Skokie campus art collection. In the meantime, you can visit www.oakton.edu/news/events/gallery.