

sculpture and other works by 24 of their lesser-known, but exciting contemporaries constitute the real draw. Through Sept 2.

Northeastern Illinois University Fine Arts Center Gallery

FREE 5500 N. St. Louis Ave at Bryn Mawr Ave (773-442-4944, [niu.edu/~art/gal.html](http://www.niu.edu/~art/gal.html)). *E: Blue to Belmont*. *Bus: 77 Belmont (24 hrs), 82 Kimball, Mon-Fri 10am-5pm.*

"Stealth." Ellen Rothenberg's multimedia installation uses digital prints, bits of camouflage fabric and other materials to investigate how technology shapes our experience of geography. Through Aug 3.

Polish Museum of America

984 N. Milwaukee Ave at Augusta Blvd (773-384-3352, pma.pvna.org). *E: Blue to Division*. *Bus: 56 Milwaukee, 66 Chicago (24 hrs), Mon-Wed, Fri-Sun 11am-4pm. \$5 suggested donation, \$3 kids under 12, \$4 students and seniors.*

"J-Walking." This group show of local emerging artists such as Burtonwood and Holmes and Alain Park explores the relationship between personal identity and community. Through Aug 27.

Racine Art Museum

441 Main St, Racine, WI (262-638-8300, ramart.org). *\$5, \$3 seniors and students, members and kids under 12 free. Tue-Sat 10am-5pm.*

"Garry Knox Bennett: Call Me Chairmaker." Have a seat, California-based studio furniture artist Garry Knox Bennett won't mind—even though his chairs have been tweaked beyond the point of functionality. His 52 chairs on exhibit here are sometimes funny, and always sculptures. Through Sept 23.

"What a Dish!" This exhibition features dinnerware and serving pieces from the RAM's nationally recognized collection of housewares. Through Oct 21.

Smart Museum of Art

FREE University of Chicago, 5550 S Greenwood Ave at 55th St (773-702-0200, smart-museum.uchicago.edu). *Bus: 4 Cottage Grove (24 hrs), 55 Garfield (24 hrs), Tue, Wed, Fri 10am-4pm, Thu 10am-8pm, Sat-Sun 11am-5pm.*

"Majestic Nature/Golden History: German Romantic Art from the Crawford Collection and the Smart Museum of Art." Long before Germany became a nation in 1871, its artists found inspiration in its wild landscape and Gothic heritage. This exhibition presents art from the resulting Romantic movement as well as the Neoclassicism it replaced. Through Oct 21.

"Living Modern: German and Austrian Art and Design, 1890-1933." This exhibition marshals more than 100 paintings, sculptures, drawings, prints, photographs, and product designs from the Smart Museum's collection to trace the development of Modernism in Germany and Austria from Jugendstil to the Bauhaus. Through Sept 16.

Galleries

River North

E: Driegen, Purple (rush hrs) to Chicago. Bus: 29, 66 (24 hrs), 156.

Aldo Castilho Gallery

233 W. Huron St between Wells and Franklin Sts (312-337-2536, artaldo.com). *Tue-Sat 11am-6pm.*

"Jesus Cobo." Ecuadorian artist Jesus Cobo presents sculptures that incorporate plant and animal forms. Through Jul 7.

Reefer madness

Two sisters get artists around the world hooked on a giant crocheted reef.

After writing about science for 25 years, Margaret Wertheim decided it was time to add a new chapter.

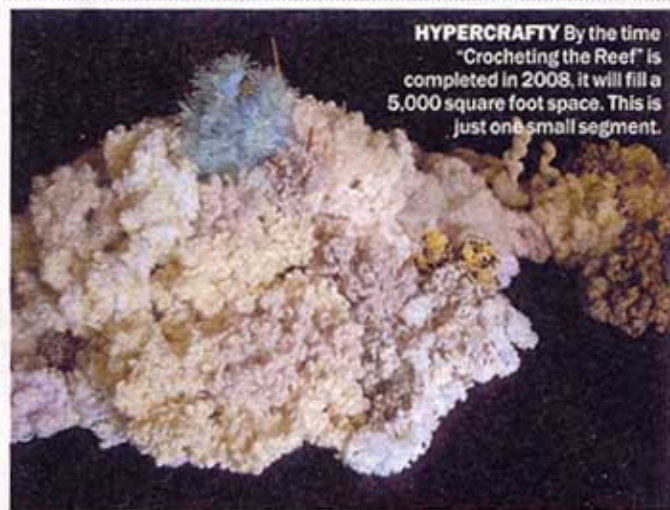
"So much science writing is aimed at a loop of people who already understand science," Wertheim says. "I wanted an organization that could present events on what I think are the poetic and aesthetic dimensions of science." So, along with her twin sister, Christine (an artist and writer who teaches in the critical studies department at the California Institute of the Arts), she cofounded the Institute for Figuring. The Los Angeles-based educational organization's goal is to show people the beauty of stuff like the physics of snowflakes and the mathematics of paper folding.

One of its first online exhibitions was a group of models by Cornell University mathematician Daina Taimina, who managed to illustrate a difficult geometric concept—the hyperbolic plane—by crocheting it. The sisters, who grew up in a craft-making household in Australia, grabbed some hooks and made a bunch of models inspired by Taimina. "Crochet is something we grew up doing and loved," Wertheim says. They lined up their woolly creations and had the same reaction: "Oh, this is really cool. It looks like a coral reef."

The accidental structure inspired "Crocheting the Reef," a project designed to call attention to the plight of the Great Barrier Reef near the coast of Australia. It was also a way to honor women's craft, Wertheim says.

"I put a little thing up on the website, and then the Andy Warhol Museum called me and asked, 'Can we show it?'" she says.

By then the collective project had taken on a life of its own. About a dozen serious crocheters around the world had begun to contribute pieces with their own aesthetic flair. "Even though it is like a mathematical formula, each has a unique style," Wertheim says. There likely will be a slew of additional participants from Chicago after Wertheim presents a workshop at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum at noon Friday 29.



HYPERCRAFTY By the time "Crocheting the Reef" is completed in 2008, it will fill a 5,000 square foot space. This is just one small segment.

The Chicago component of the "reef" will be displayed at the Chicago Cultural Center during the green-themed Chicago Humanities Festival in November. Ultimately, the crocheted reef will be displayed in its entirety at LACE in Los Angeles in January 2008. If you are wondering about the scope of this endeavor, suffice it to say that the experimental art center is 5,000 square feet. "It will essentially fill the space," Wertheim says.

As with any crochet project that begins with a few simple stitches, the reef quickly expanded to a more complicated level. "We discovered the rubbish vortex," Wertheim says. That would be the enormous patch of plastic garbage out in the Pacific that pollutes the oceans. They decided to crochet the vortex, but in contrast to colorful wool and silk yarns of the reef, they decided to weave materials recycled from plastic bags, bottle caps, straws and other trash. Helle Jorgensen, a Danish-born biologist-turned-artist based in Sydney, will render the bulk of this sea-junk phenomenon with this "yarn" made of common household detritus. The project motivated the sisters to attempt to cut plastic out of their lives. It turned out to be impossible. "We cannot cut it out, but we can cut down," Wertheim says. "We now consider the coral reef the beautiful frame that will surround the vortex."

Occasionally, Wertheim offers a little art direction after seeing images e-mailed to them, asking for a bit more pink or a smaller or larger stitch. "Anyone who is an experienced crocheter can immediately grasp enough of it to start exploring," Wertheim says, but beginners can quickly learn. Some make one model and that's enough, she says. A few have taken to constructing their own subreef focusing on large patches such as kelp or anemone gardens.

Not everyone finds the crochet reef a charming idea. "People in science hear of this and think it's idiotic," Wertheim says. But nonscience folks have really responded. "The science world should realize it is things like this that will bring people to understanding...real ecology, higher geometry and the whole issue of hyperbolic space," she says. All that from a couple of women sitting around. "It is really lovely that in the context of crocheting a few woolly jumpers, you can be led to a discussion of the mathematics of the cosmos." —Ruth Lopez

The free "Crocheting the Reef" workshop is noon to 2pm Friday 29 at the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum. Lunch and supplies are provided. For reservations, call 312-413-5353. Visit hullhousemuseum.org or theiff.org for details. See Around Town.

Alfredena Gallery

434 W. Ontario St between Kingsbury and Orleans Sts (312-944-4340, alfredenagallery.com). *Tue-Fri noon-5pm; Sat 10am-5pm.*

"Structure." Paul Kass's work—which uses building materials such as vinyl and sandpaper—is something in between painting and sculpture. Through Jul 28.

"Calamity." Lisa Boumstein-Smalley's ghostly drawings on Plexiglas

evoke arctic and lunar landscapes. Through Jul 28.

Byron Roche Gallery

750 N. Franklin St, suite 105, between Chicago Ave and Superior St (312-654-0144, byronroche.com). *Mon-Sat 11am-6pm.*

"Sandra Dawson: New Paintings." Chicago artist Sandra Dawson emphasizes text and surface detail in her mixed-media, multilayered paintings.

revealing her training as a printmaker. Through Jul 6.

Roy Boyd Gallery

739 N. Wells St at Superior St (312-642-1606, royboydgallery.com). *Tue-Sat 10am-5:30pm.*

"Junction: Paintings 1997-2007." This show features William Steiger's crisp, vividly colored paintings of trains, grain elevators and amusement park rides. Through Jul 10.