

CHAIN REACTION

In which we ferret out some of the best artist-run spaces by asking fellow gallerists **By CLAIRE VOON**

Julius Caesar

3311 W. Carroll Ave., East Garfield Park

The veteran gallery is the perfect spot to begin our exploration. It turns 11 this year, and that kind of longevity is rare in this scene. The space has hosted more than 110 solo and group shows, often by emerging artists. Its four codirectors tend to hand over the keys of the white-walled main space (and dark backroom) to featured artists, giving them freedom to experiment in ways they cannot elsewhere. **COMING UP** Opening April 13, Nate Young's solo show investigates his lineage, using sound, darkness, and horse bones to explore gaps in his grandmother's stories about her father's migration from the South.



Caesar's Bridge, staged in 2014 by the duo Every House Has a Door

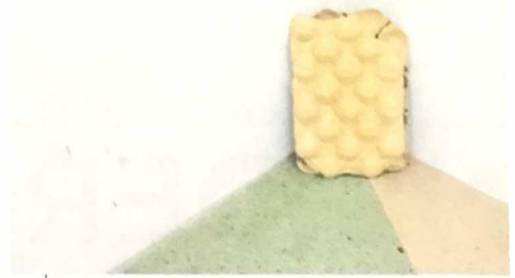


Julius Caesar codirector **KATE SIERZPUTOWSKI** recommends ...

Prairie

2055 W. Cermak Rd., Heart of Chicago

SAYS SIERZPUTOWSKI "Prairie seeks out an eclectic mix of local and nonlocal artists. I go there to have an intimate experience with the work of artists I might have heard of only tangentially. There was a solo show for Isabelle Frances McGuire, who made frames for photographs out of dead dough [dough without yeast], attached with bug carcasses. It seemed like an offering to fully consume McGuire's work at your own risk." **COMING UP** An exhibition of conical bamboo hats and rice plants by Giang Pham, opening April 6, explores the artist's traumas of living in post-war Vietnam and facing poverty in America.



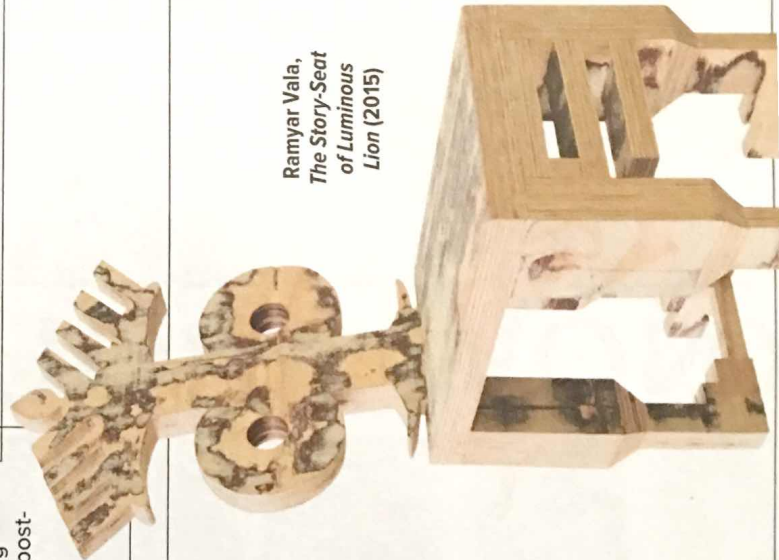
Extase director **BUDGIE BIRKA-WHITE** recommends ...

Produce Model

1007 W. 19th St., Pilsen

SAYS BIRKA-WHITE "It creates a space to amplify and redistribute voices that are often silenced. The exhibitions include many women, non-white, and non-Western artists and other underrepresented groups. I also appreciate that it makes its Pilsen community feel welcome through gestures like having its website in Spanish as well as in English."

Ramyar Vala, *The Story-Seat of Luminous Lion* (2015)



Prairie codirector **TIM MANN** recommends ...

Extase

2523 W. Chicago Ave., West Town

SAYS MANN "This apartment gallery gets creative in translating domestic areas—a very small bedroom, a backyard, and a porch—into exhibition space. The curation is well done, so it doesn't feel weird, like you're walking through a stranger's house. I've seen an entire floor covered with a rug installation by Mia + Maire, embedded with videos and sculptures, and a closet that Jesse Meredith closed off and converted into a mirrored room." **COMING UP** The gallery will celebrate its first anniversary with a June show of previously exhibited and new artists.

Produce Model codirectors
JAVIER BOSQUES and MAGGIE CROWLEY recommend ...

ACRE Projects

1345 W. 19th St., Pilsen

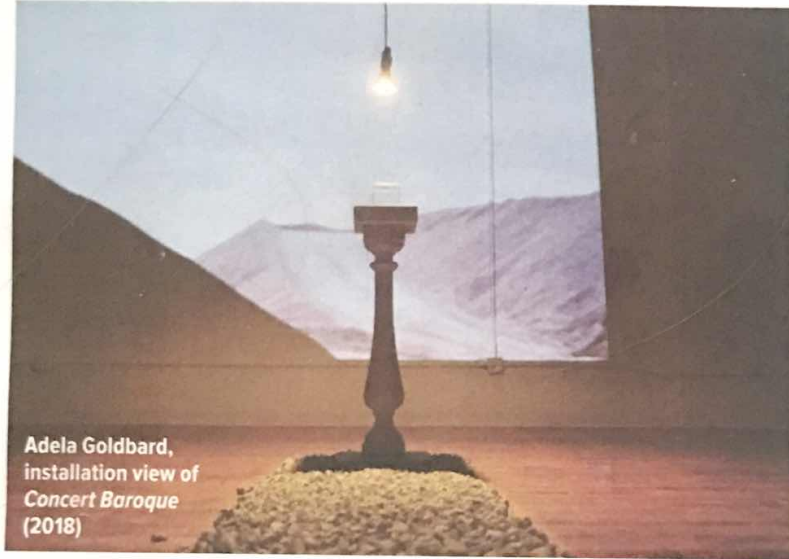
SAYS BOSQUES "The nonprofit does a lot to cultivate emerging artists. It connects them with curators through a residency in Steuben, Wisconsin, and those artists have an opportunity to exhibit at ACRE." **SAYS CROWLEY** "The most recent show I saw there was *Circumambulation*, a parade of objects and totems that felt seminal yet old and was punctuated with color. The artwork that stuck out most was a **cast egg carton by Danielle Rosen.**" **COMING UP** A group show with artists Ivy Guild, Marina Peng, and Vanessa Viruet, opening April 5, explores the themes of visibility and voyeurism.

Baby Blue director
CALEB BECK recommends ...

LVL3

1542 N. Milwaukee Ave.,
Wicker Park

SAYS BECK "When I came to Chicago, everybody told me to go to LVL3. It's a fixture in the artist-run-space scene that maintains a high level of consistency with its mostly group shows. A lot of spaces explode onto the scene and then fizzle out. It's been going for nine years, and that endurance is inspiring. The first show this year, *Too Good to Be True*, featured mixed-media paintings by David Heo and ambitious, strange work by **Yowshien Kuo—hyperrealistic paintings of guns** with sheet metal on the back that had a high degree of technical skill." **COMING UP** Starting April 6, dream-like altered prints of landscapes by Dutch artist Wyne Veen will be displayed with small ready-mades by local artist Yani Aviles in the show *Source of Origin*.



Adela Goldbar,
installation view of
Concert Baroque
(2018)

ACRE Projects acting executive director
KATE BOWEN recommends ...

Lithium

1932 S. Halsted St., Pilsen

SAYS BOWEN "The space specializes in time-based media works—videos, audio, projections—which tend to not get a lot of gallery representation because they're difficult to exhibit if you don't have the commercial resources. That's a pretty male-heavy field, but women and femmes help control the programming here." **COMING UP** A solo show by Jessica Tucker opens this spring, followed by a collaborative performance between Cassandra Davis and Katinka Kleijn, a cellist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Lithium codirector
NICKY NI recommends ...

Baby Blue

2201 S. Halsted St., Pilsen

SAYS NI "The gallery gravitates toward painting and sculpture and produces sophisticatedly curated monthly shows, many of them for Chicago-based artists. I really enjoyed **Yve's Concave Mirror** by Minami Kobayashi. The placement of her ceramic pieces was quite intricate, suggesting a play between solitude and multitude, colorfulness and colorlessness, and revelation and concealment." **COMING UP** Starting April 12, the New York City gallery Super Dutchess is taking over the space for *Euphoric Flex*, an eight-artist exhibition that considers euphoria in the age of anxiety.

