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One Dollar

Arts & Entertainment

Night vision Exhibit about Passover

By Emily D. Soloff
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Though Passover is over, it isn't too late to see how 18 Chicago-area artists chose to illustrate the themes associated with the holiday in a mixed-media exhibit at the DePaul University Art Gallery.

The show, which opened April 8, is part of DePaul's two-month long exploration of Jewish life in America, organized by the American Studies Program.

The exhibit includes 24 works, ranging from abstract paintings to calligraphy, ceramic and fiber art.

Artists were invited to submit works around the theme: "Why is this night different?"

"Some of the art is more conceptual and reflects broader themes, like freedom and enslavement," said Riva Feshbach, gallery curator. Some pieces are explicitly about Passover and others are more indirect.

"This is a holiday of universal interest. Passover is thematically rich. It is a holiday that many Jews use to reconnect with their Jewish roots. For a lot of people, it is a point of re-entry to Judaism."

While many of the contributing artists are Jewish, the competition was not limited to Jewish artists.

"One of the points I wanted people to think about was that while the holiday is tied to a

specific, historical Jewish experience, it has been inspiring Jews and non-Jews throughout history. It can be interpreted in many different ways," she said.

"I'm Jewish. It's my favorite holiday. When I was growing up, the Haggadah we used was called 'The Freedom Seder.' It combined Jewish experience with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. Now if you go and look for a Haggadah, you can find many different kinds."

Feshbach hopes visitors will go away from the exhibit "understanding a little bit more about Passover and a lot more about how Passover is relevant to everybody. It doesn't matter what faith you are. It is relevant to everybody today," she said.

A walk through the exhibit reveals how artists approach the themes. Cheselyn Amato's photocopy transfers on paper have a Kabbalistic feel to them that explores what life means, Feshbach said. Amato has been working with Jewish themes for 15 years.

Paula Buchwald's hard and soft ground etching "Exodus" is a literal interpretation of the going out from Egypt that shows the people being led by the hand of G-d.

Calligrapher Rose Ann Chasman contributed two books. One illustrates the popular song "Chad Gadya, One Kid," which appears at the end of the Seder. The other, "Four Who Must Be Answered," illustrates the questions asked by the

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Paula Buchwald's "Exodus, 1993" shows the Israelites going out of Egypt and G-d giving the 10 Commandments to Moses