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Kings & Queens: Pinball, Imagists and Chicago

New Exhibition at Illinois State Museum in Springfield

Saturday, May 20 – August 19, 2017

Public Opening Reception: 5:30 – 7:30 p.m., June 2

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Two of Chicago’s greatest exports – pinball and imagist painting – have an intertwined history of mutual appreciation. Arguably the world’s finest pinball machines were made in Chicago’s North Side factories, and many of those were produced by Elmhurst’s Gottlieb family. As those machines reached their apex of pictorial and engineering ingenuity, the Chicago artists now known as Imagists were finding their unique visual sensibilities. They drew inspiration from pinball’s high contrast coloration, absurd juxtapositions, and ultra-flat forms. Pinball was but one inspiration for these artists, along with the city’s many colorful storefronts and the enormously popular Riverview Park.

A new exhibition, *Kings & Queens: Pinball, Imagists and Chicago*, comes to the Illinois State Museum (ISM) in Springfield as a collaborative effort organized by Jenny Gibbs, Executive Director of the Elmhurst Art Museum, Acting Director of the Illinois State Museum’s Art and History Department Robert Sill, and curated by New York curator Dan Nadel.

In 1982, imagist Ed Paschke curated the exhibition *Flip! Flash! Pinball Art!* at the Chicago Cultural Center. Paschke’s painting *Black Out*, based on pinball, was prominently displayed, and the artist himself selected scores of games, most from the city, to make good on his debt to the otherwise anonymous art form. The exhibition was the only one curated by Paschke, and one of just a handful of pinball shows ever mounted at a cultural institution.

The exhibition at the ISM in Springfield will display sixteen pinball machines from the 1960s through the 1980s, nearly all designed and built in Chicago, alongside Imagist paintings, sculptures and prints by Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Ed Flood, Ed Paschke, Christina Ramberg, Barbara Rossi, Ray Yoshida and Karl Wirsum.

Kings & Queens: Pinball, Imagists and Chicago will reveal a new view of both Chicago and some of its finest exports with major works on loan courtesy of Elmhurst College, the Illinois State Museum, the Rockford Art Museum, and Kavi Gupta Gallery, Chicago, and private collectors. All pinball machines are on loan from private collectors.

The exhibition opens at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield on Saturday, May 20, and will continue through Saturday, August 19. A public reception will be held on Friday, June 2 from 5:30 -7:30 p.m. Attendees at the reception will have the opportunity to play select pinball machines.

The Illinois State Museum is open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon until 4:30 p.m. The Museum is located at 502 South Spring Street in Springfield. Museum admission: \$5 for adults ages 19-64; free admission for children, seniors, and veterans.