

Wednesday, Feb 07, 2018

OU hosting **Forbidden Art**, an exhibit from Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

A partnership between the Polish Mission of the Orchard Lake Schools and the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Memorial and Museum of Poland has brought a three-ton exhibit of concentration camp artwork to Oakland University for display in the Heritage Room of the Oakland Center between Feb. 5 and Feb. 22.

Forbidden Art is free and open to everyone Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sunday from noon to 8 p.m.

“As the crimes of the Nazis fade further into the past, exhibits like this are especially important, said Derek Hastings, Ph.D., associate professor of history at Oakland University. “Works of art can convey meaning in ways that are often more effective than words. These objects in particular provide students and other viewers with more immediate insights into the victims' experiences than can be gained from history books alone.”

The exhibit features a series of enlarged depictions of some of the most fragile and rare examples of artwork created by prisoners during the camp's operation between 1940-1945. The pieces were chosen from more than 2,000 pieces in the collection at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

The works were made illegally in the camp. Some document the reality of the camp, and others reveal the artist's attempt to escape mentally from the cruelty of the camp. The art ranges from caricatures, to portraits to fairy tale illustrations. Each piece of art is displayed within large illuminated panels that artfully relate to the shape, texture and color of the prisoner barracks.

The traveling exhibit was created to share the authenticity of Auschwitz with American audiences, and encourage a deepened, fact-based understanding of the Holocaust. It has traveled the United States and the world, but has not been seen in Michigan since 2016.

Former President Barack Obama said of the exhibit when it was in Chicago in 2014, “Exhibitions like *Forbidden Art* bring to light the stories fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters who endured the unthinkable cruelty of concentration camps.”

About the Polish Mission:

The purpose of the Polish Mission of the Orchard Lake Schools, which were founded in 1885 by Polish immigrants, is to preserve and promote Polish and Polish-American culture, tradition and history for present and future generations. The Polish Mission organizes programs, courses, events that highlight Polish and Polish-American culture and accomplishments, and ensures a repository for artifacts, archival materials, works of art and publications.



Sample of the traveling artwork that is on display at Oakland University in the Oak Center Heritage room until February 22.