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Regin Igloria in Chicago

By **Jillian Steinbauer**

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CHICAGO— For Manila-born, Chicago-raised artist **Regin Igloria**, there is no simple way to get back to nature. The road from urbanity to rurality is undoubtedly paved, and along the way, you'll pass backpackers, bikers, and others seeking a thrill or an escape. When you arrive, you'll find nature, but it will no doubt be mediated through a culture of consumption and commodification.

Igloria conveys these sentiments clearly through his artistic output, which includes works on paper; a variety of painted, drawn, and embroidered patches that riff on Scout flair; events he calls "performance hikes" (long hikes that combine trekking and sketching); and artist's books. Whereas his earlier work examined nature and the manmade equipment that goes with it in a fairly earnest way — by devoting an entire series to black-and-white drawings of backpacks, for example, or painting charmingly simple miniature landscape patches — his latest works on paper, on view in [Zg Gallery](#)'s office space through January 3, take his exploration one step further, rendering a kind of bizarre confusion that has resulted from the proliferation of a highly commodified camping and outdoors culture.

In *Commuter*, *Composite*, *Consideration*, a bike, the ultimate emblem of urban environmental friendliness, is completely twisted and tangled up with a plant (and possibly another bike), so that rather than complementing each other, the bike and the environment have become locked in an animated clash. *Hanging Basket* depicts a hanging plant floating almost surreally in the sky above the tops of trees; the contrast between the natural setting of the latter and the artificiality of the former is palpable. *Walking*, which shows the equivalent of a 10-car pile-up for jogging strollers, looks like a picture from an L.L. Bean catalog gone horribly wrong.

"I have conflicted feelings about the wilderness and the outdoors," Igloria writes in his artist's statement. "My eagerness to become part of its beauty and awe is dampened by guilt and disappointment, because I have chosen to enter a world of privilege."

Here are Igloria's picks for this weekend in Chicago and elsewhere:

1. Hidden Treasures: The Lane Tech Murals at [Chicago Cultural Center](#), through March 1

"This is an exhibition of WPA-era murals, most done by artists such as Henry George Brandt and others around 1909–13, which were restored in the mid-1990s. It showcases a collection of work that exemplified the socioeconomic and cultural mood of the city of Chicago of that time period. These were works of art that I remember seeing every day during my high school years (I attended Lane Tech during 1988–92), and they represent an amazing aspect of the Chicago Public Schools that most people wouldn't think about."

2. David Schutter: Repertory at [Tony Wight Gallery](#), through January 3

"Paintings and drawings based on 10 cloud studies painted by 19th-century English artist John Constable, from the collection of the Yale Center for British Art."

3. Alexis Granwell: An Infinite Distance at [Arlington Arts Center](#), Arlington, Va., through January 17

"Architectural interventions using ordinary materials — string, PVC pipe, wood, paper pulp — as well as drawings, both on paper and directly on the gallery walls. A former Ragdale Foundation [an artists' retreat outside Chicago] resident doing some nice stuff."

4. Michael Dixon: Sambo Scratches His Navel and Watches His Crazy Sister at the [West Valley Art Museum](#), Surprise, Ariz., through February 8

"Identity-driven, thickly laid, in-your-face portraiture and self-portraiture by a young African-American artist. Also a previous Ragdale resident. Interesting story about his search for his biological father."

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