The above Northeast Minneapolis Arts District map highlights in orange land which had industrial use in 1984 and had changed to a use other than industrial as of 2016, the most recent data available. Over those 32 years, industrial land in the Arts District (outlined in green) went down by 53% from 228 acres to 106.

**Mia visitors gripped by Barlow, Szychalski shows**

by Josh Blanc

As a former museum guard, I can tell you most art works get a cursory count and a relationship may not be made with the work. But, do people spend 5-10 minutes at each piece, reading and studying, discussing... but that’s what I observed many visitors did during a visit to the shows by two local artists at Mia, the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Leslie Barlow and Piotr Szychalski, who both work out of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District, show some very timely work of what our society is going through both politically and culturally. Both shows have a variety of paintings, drawings, video and performance art and their lived experiences.

What stands out in both exhibitions are the incredible skills both artists possess. The range of drawing, collage and painting skills are apparent with Barlow’s highly realistic portrait work evoking hard to achieve with many surreal and whimsical backgrounds. Many of the figures appear to be floating in a world of rich colors and sometimes real imagery of books or plants. Others with Maltese-like essenced line work inhabit ghost-like spaces. This is not common in portrait paintings.

Both artists chose one size of can—Barlow’s 16 He-size paintings at 60” x 20” and Piotr Szychalski’s 225 posters at 20” x 29”. Choosing one size can allow an artist to focus on a set space to create into and allow the variations to happen only within a constrained space.

Both have intense subject matter. Szychalski’s stark black-and-white work is a direct political pole in the eye with a sharp dick. He takes on the responses to COVID-19 by the government as well as society’s racist and dystopian visual permeated in current popular culture (photo above right). Barlow’s work is more subtle, dealing with racial identity, a more subtly patterned and colorful setting. People of many different races and ages are looking at you, inviting you in. This challenges the status quo of subjects commonly encountered at art museums. MMA’s Composed of both paintings and video interviews, the work shares stories of 16 Minnesotans who use the terms mixed race, multiracial, and/or transracial/inter racial to identify themselves and their lived experiences.

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