

CENTERSTAGE

www.centerstagechicago.com

WHAT'S
HOT
ONLINE



CAFFEINE AND COCKTAILS

If you think wine and beer don't mix with your coffee fix, think again and visit centerstagechicago.com/hot.



GREEN
High-heeled shoes, center

eat your art out

BY KATEA ELER

kat@centerstagechicago.com

how many times have you wandered into a highly recommended restaurant only to be visually assaulted by cheap neon lights and crusty posters in chintzy frames? We know it's hard to find a place that pairs impressive meals with an artistically inspired atmosphere. Luckily for all the art-lovers' souls out there, we scoured the city for places where the fine art on the walls matches the culinary works of art on your plate.

Tweet 3020 N. Sheridan, (773) 728-5020 and **Big Chicks**, 3024 N. Sheridan, (773) 728-5522

People go to **Tweet** for its generously sized organic brunches and to neighboring **Big Chicks** for beers, but they keep going back to these sister spots to gawk at the art. Owner Michelle Fiv started collecting in the '70s and bought her Diane Arbus prints in the 1990s. Though they're not originals — museums have claimed all of those — they were printed by the Arbus estate and signed by Diane's daughter, Don.

Look around and you'll also find black-and-white photos of nude women by Manuel Alvarez Bravo and self-portraits by emerging photographer Jon Davis, who was recently in a show at Columbia College's Museum of Contemporary Photography. Eat like a well-

Enhance dining pleasure with these feasts for the eyes

fed (not starving) artist by ordering up Chicago art master Tony Fitzpatrick's favorite skirt steak and eggs.

Yrs. 474 N. W. Clark, (312) 800-0001

Chels Rick Trueman and Gale Good don't mess around with their food or their art at this upscale, jackets-required restaurant, where minimalist design elements let diners focus on the fine art scattered on the walls. Try the three-course, \$56 prix-fixe menu, which changes daily. Recently, it included appetizers like prime beef tartare, with fresh red pepper, raspberry and cucumber, and plum-walnut/pumpkin-ginger tapena served delicately with butter-milk-lime foam for dessert.

Beyond the exquisite eats, the artwork truly enhances your sensory experience here. In the dining room, gaze at Andy Warhol's "Starlyn," a photographic negative-style silhouette of a woman's print, or lounge in the bar area with Yves Klein's "Blue Venus," a powder-blue torso set inside a glass box.

Lala Cafe, 2027 N. Kedzie, (773) 689-8654

Aside from the ever-changing knock-you-out-of-nuts, Lala has something else that's always on the menu: its art collection. Co-owner Anders Nilson searches for local and national artists, and switches up the shows every two or three months.

Currently, Lala patrons get an eyeful of art by Todd Baxter, whose manipulated digital photos such as "Big Moustache" with a well-dressed woman lovingly poking a Sheri rug monster with glass eyes and horns, cover the restaurant's walls.

Don't wait until dessert to get a dose of the fine art here; it's better to start your day off admiring the works while you cook an sweet potato pancakes drizzled in cranberry compote, roasted pecans and custard cream.

Heartland Cafe, 2000 N. Glenwood, (773) 463-8000

This spot — part cafe, part bar, part general store — is a Bohemian haven of vegetarian-friendly eats, flowing beer on tap and lounge products for sale. Though it harkens back to the hippie heyday of the '60s, the monthly rotating art shows span decades.

For November, a group of Chicago artists have completed contemporary renditions of the Surrealist-inspired "suspense corpse" game, which was founded in the 1920s. The artists pass around a folded piece of paper; the first person draws on the top, the next



Brunch-goers flock to **Tweet** for its organic eats, but they keep coming back to feast their eyes on the art. | PHOTO: TWEET FOR THE SUN-TIMES

on the middle and so on, without letting the others see which image was added to the piece. The result is always a bizarre amalgamation.

At **Heartland**, the 30-plus watercolor-on-paper or ink-on-paper corpses feature much of the wall image as a bird roosted to the ground like a tree and a man's nose and ears transforming into wings. Combine these pieces with a grilled soy-chicken sandwich, and you've got your eyes and your hands on works of art.

NoFriction Cafe, 2020 N. California, (773) 278-7179

Works by local artists cover the walls of this easy-to-miss corner spot, with floor-to-ceiling win-

dows, dark wooden floors and soft brick walls.

Playfully, catch **NoFriction** regular Tracy Kertelshader's snafu word-image association paintings. In one piece, an upside-down screwdriver and a screwy screw float in space above the word "undiscovered."

The works here usual require a bit of pondering, so stuff your face with some brain food, like an irresistibly doughy pumpkin scone, while you mull them over. Before you leave it, you'll be inspired to create your own masterpieces. If you ask nicely, owners Hilda and Lou Stouck might just have a wall for you.



Rare jolimon and Mary jolly eye **Tweet**'s heaping hot platter, with smoked salmon, hard-boiled eggs, cream cheese and more.