This Art Exhibition Is All About Beer

Nathaniel Ainley — Aug 8 2016

Picnic on the Mississippi, The Meek Co., Lent by Les Mack, ABA National Brewery Museum. Images courtesy the MOWA
Without America’s Dairyland, we wouldn’t have Miller, Pabst Blue Ribbon, or even Leinenkugel, which is why we’re perfectly happy to see *Art on Tap: Early Wisconsin Brewery Art and Advertising* (http://wisconsinart.org/exhibitions/art-on-tap.aspx), an archival art exhibition of beer products, advertisements and miscellaneous brew related merchandise passed on through the generations and assembled by some of the country’s most illustrious breweriana collectors. For those unfamiliar with the word ‘breweriana,’ it refers to pretty much everything containing a brewery or brand name beer on it. It’s considerably official—not only does it have its own category page on eBay (http://www.ebay.com/rpp/breweriana-beer?_fsrp=2), antique beer collectors have their own non-profit corporation, the American Breweriana Association (http://www.americanbreweriana.org/).
Art on Tap is one of a handful of exhibitions on at the Museum of Wisconsin Art (http://wisconsinart.org/) right now. The show features all kinds of beer related mementos, including posters, tin cans, glasses, labels, calendars, lithographs, even bottle openers. The curious collection is like a crash course in major beer companies, and how they not only coined some of the most widely recognized brand slogans, but pioneered modern-day marketing practices.

![Miller Brewing Co. Factory Scene, self-framed lithograph on tin, The H.D. Beach Co., 1905, From the collection of Robert and Debra Markiewicz](image)

The industry really started to take off roughly 30 years before prohibition, around the turn of the 20th century, when breweries transitioned from local independent businesses to nationally recognized brands. During this time, brewing companies began to focus their energy on adverts that made their products look most appealing to American drinkers. In this race to win over a thirsty American public, beer maestros produced what the MOWA is calling, “some of the most iconic images of early American pop culture.” In the short supplementary video below, the museum travels to the homes of avid breweriana collectors Rich Yahr, John Steiner, and Debra Markiewicz, to look over some of their collections.

The Art of Collecting
Miller Buffet Girl, lithograph, 1900-1910, Collection of the MillerCoors Archives
The BEER
That Made Milwaukee Famous

Schlitz Girl on the Globe, Lithograph on tin, Chas. W. Shonk Company, c. 1900, Collection of Robert and Debra Markiewicz.
In addition to tastings, the museum will be hosting multiple panel discussions as well as craft brewing classes. The *Art on Tap* show is on at the Museum of Wisconsin Art through September 25th. For more information, head over to the Museum of Wisconsin’s Art’s website (http://wisconsinart.org/).

Related:

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*Crack Open an Ice Cold Six Pack of Beer GIFs* (http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/crack-open-an-ice-cold-six-pack-of-beer-gifs)

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