

BE NOT DECEIVED BY ENVIIOUS COMPETITORS  
**WAIT FOR THE BIG ONE!**  
 COMING  
**IN REGAL SPLendor**  
**THE GREAT**  
**BYRON BURFORD**  
**CIRCUS**  
**OF ARTISTIC WONDERS**

Vacation is over and the circus has started—at Sheldon Art Gallery. "It must be Seen and Heard to be Believed," says the playbill, and indeed it must.

The circus is an art exhibit — The Byron Burford Circus of Artistic Wonders. It is sponsored by the Nebraska Art Association and will play until April 23.

The show, a managerie of paintings and moving sculpture, occupies the northern half of the second floor of the gallery. The walls of the northeast room are draped with canvas, lions and tigers growl and an acrobat swings on his trapeze.

The only thing the "circus" lacks is the smell of the cages and the sawdust on the floor.

At the March 24 gala opening, the artist, Byron Burford, said the exhibition is the culmination of his life-long love affair with the big top.

"My mother used to let me get up early in the morning and watch the circus come into town," he said. "I would sit on the porch, eating my breakfast and watch them bring in the animals and those brightly painted wagons."

When he was 15, he spent a week with the Tom Mix Circus. The circus was organized by Mix, a silent film star of the 1920s.

Said Burford: "It might have been the most exciting week in my life. I carried food and water for the animals and helped paint

wagons."

Wagon painting might have been the start of his career — he is now a professor of art at the University of Iowa. But despite his position and reputation he still "runs off to the circus every summer just to paint wagons and play in the band."

"I always wanted a circus of my own," he explained. "Some people don't consider what I do to be art, but I don't do this for those people. People who have never been to a museum in their lives enjoy this show. It has a broad appeal."

The silver-haired artist looked like an excited 10-year-old as he donned his red and blue band conductor's uniform.

"True, I run this circus, but I don't think of myself as a ringmaster," he said. "I'd sooner think of myself as a band director." With that he picked up his baton and the brightly attired band struck-up "The Barnum and Bailey Circus March."

At the conclusion of the song he said, "Listen to that music. It's exciting. That's why circuses are having a revival now. There is nothing really exciting anymore. People are dissatisfied with the unreality of television."

He paused, smiled and said: "When I was small. . . Well, can you imagine being 10 years old and have 30 or 40 elephants stomping right in front of you? That's scary. That's real."



Opening night. . . Spectators donned circus garb.



The big top. . . "An Everchanging Coruscation of Skill and Talents"



Impresario Byron Burford.