

## arts/entertainment

## Dickinson, a 'precisionist' from the past

By Martha Murdock

An art historian can play the part of a detective. An artist lost in the shuffle of the years, through diligent sleuthing, can be rediscovered by the researcher. Such an artist is Preston Dickinson. Such a detective is Ruth Cloudman.

Cloudman spent two years following the trail left by Dickinson, an artist of the first two decades of this century. The results of her work, an exhibition and a descriptive text, are being featured at the Sheldon Art Gallery through Oct. 7.

Dickinson was a Precisionist. "The Precisionists were not a cohesive group of artists," Cloudman explained. They had no manifesto or organization. Rather they were grouped together because of their common style.

"For the most part, they were precise, meticulous

painters influenced by French cubism. They simplified forms, mixed realistic and abstract designs and relied on American industrial and urban scenes for their subjects."

Cloudman, a former Joslyn Museum employee, became interested in Dickinson by chance. "I saw the pastel 'Painter's Mill' which belongs to Joslyn," she said. I was taken with it and decided to look into Dickinson's work. I found there had never been a one-man exhibition or a detailed study of any kind on Dickinson."

Although the art world was aware of Dickinson's work during his lifetime, Dickinson lost prominence for several reasons. Two years after Dickinson died at 41 in 1930, his dealer went out of business and no one was left to promote his work, Cloudman explained.

IN ADDITION, his contemporaries got more attention. Dickinson experimented and tried several styles. Other

Precisionists such as Charles Schiller and Charles Dumuth were more consistent, and conservative museums preferred on their work.

"During his lifetime, especially the last five years, he became better established. If he had lived, he would probably be much better known today," said Cloudman.

Dickinson differed from other Precisionists in that he retained more detail in his work, according to Cloudman. He also injected his work with social comment.

For instance, "Tower of Gold," one of the works on display at the Sheldon, clearly shows workers oppressed by the rich executives. In the cleanly executed painting, the business men in their black suits carry balls of gold while the workers toil.

"Social comment is unusual for the Precisionists. In fact, they were often criticized for not handling social issues, especially in the 20s when industry, big business, trusts, and monopolies were prevalent. For Dickinson, it was a very individual contribution," said Cloudman.

CLOUDMAN said she believes that Dickinson is relevant today. "Art historians are going back to find the roots of American abstraction. Dickinson went to Europe in 1911. He was interested in the abstract movements there and brought their influence back with him," she said. "But he gave it a certain American flavor and never abandoned realism completely. He helped to make the new movements palatable in America and paved the way for the more abstract forms of the 40s, 50s and 60s."

Dickinson was influenced by Matisse, Cezanne, Japanese prints, Persian miniatures, early German Expressionism, and fifteenth century Netherlands paintings. All these influences can be seen in the Sheldon show.

Henri Matisse, a French Expressionist, was interested in detailed patterns and used them throughout his paintings. Dickinson included oriental and American Indian patterns in his works.

LIKE CEZANNE, Dickinson liked to emphasize the two dimensionality of the painting surface. The Harlem River of New York appears in many of his works.

"He could stand on one bank of the river and look across to the other bank and it would flatten by itself. It gave him a natural pattern," Cloudman explained.

The German Expressionists were known for their use of color. Rather than using natural coloring, they used color as a register for emotion. This extravagant use of color can be seen in many of Dickinson's works.

Several of Dickinson's paintings seem to presage Grandma Moses in their primitive use of shapes and flatness. Cloudman attributes this quality to his study of 15th century Dutch works.

Dickinson was born of English parents in Greenwich Village, N.Y. Although he spent most of his time in New York, he made a trip to Nebraska in 1924.

While in Nebraska he worked on a series of pastels with grain elevators as their subjects.

"They're wonderful visions of the grain elevators," Cloudman said. "Once you see Dickinson's pastels, you'll never see the elevators in quite the same way. They're delicate and soar so high in his pictures. It's fascinating that they fit so well into his use of industrial subjects."

## Chamber groups to play

The Lincoln Friends of Chamber Music's 15th annual musical series begins Friday, with the Mirecourt Trio, playing Mendelssohn, Martinu and Beethoven.

On Friday, Nov. 16, the Heritage Quartet will return, performing Mozart, Burrill Philips and Faure. The group performed the same series in 1976.

The Concord String Quartet will begin the second semester on Jan. 19, performing the music of Beethoven and George Rochberg. The quartet is the winner of the 1971 Naumberg Chamber Music Award.

The New York Woodwind Quintet will be the next guests, on Friday, March 7.

The Nebraska Chamber Orchestra Players will wind up the season, performing on Saturday, April 12.

All concerts will be held in the Sheldon Art Gallery Auditorium at 8 p.m. Series subscription price is \$25. Tickets will be mailed a week before the concerts.



## ABBA fan follows group's tracks

By Susan Lammers

Brian Harrifeld, a UNL business major, is the self-proclaimed ABBA fan of the world. Anyone checking his current schedule of 14 cities in 21 days would have to agree. Harrifeld is serious about following and attending the current ABBA fall tour.

Preparations started last spring with a mass-mailing to ABBA's record company and money orders to concert halls for ABBA tickets. Harrifeld said he spent \$125 on photocopies alone.

"It's taking every cent I have but it's worth it."

His life is transient, consisting of Greyhound buses, hotel rooms, and of course ABBA concerts.

Harrifeld said he had been using the groups logo on his communication with them but the management asked him to stop. Harrifeld said it was love at first sight when he first heard "Dancing Queen" in 1977. He sent the billboard clipping that showed "Dancing Queen" as number one to the group.

"I just love their music."

For all his efforts Harrifeld has never met the group members. By accident, he discovered at the Alladin Hotel in Las Vegas that a backstage pass had been issued for him.

He met the group's manager at the hotel when he went into the lobby after a concert there and took the man's photo after hearing Swedish voices.

He met the group's sound engineer in Portland and that man promised to "tell them I was here."

The only casualty of the trip was the theft of his suitcase containing almost his entire wardrobe, including three prize ABBA T-shirts. The T-shirt he was wearing at the time said "I've been to every ABBA concert."

Asked about his parents' reaction, he said, "At first they were against it, but now they're pretty excited too. I got them to think my way."

His plans after the tour include going back to school in January and possibly attempting the same hectic trip again.

"After this, everything's going to be a letdown."

Fine Print store  
'learning center'

A different sort of bookstore is getting new management at 2639 Randolph St. Fine Print, an outgrowth of Open Harvest Co-Op, is now owned and run by seven women volunteers.

Kathy "Stick" Wakely, a CETA worker, said that Fine Print had financial problems that they attribute to "a lack of communication and accountability" in the former set-up, which consisted of two full-time employees and many volunteers who worked two or three hours a week. The present system is a smaller group.

One of the owners' main goals is for the store to be a learning center, "although we have many others" said Mary Hansen, Open Harvest's volunteer coordinator. The store wants to help customers acquire information and skills in a variety of subjects and show alternative methods, she added.

A current project is a reference center where informa-

tion can be gained that is not available from a library. Hansen stressed that Fine Print is not trying to take the place of a regular library but to add more resources. Among the subjects covered are education, children's books, nuclear energy, technology, alternate energy sources, political action, cooking and nutrition.

"We also hope to get into other things such as workshops and skill exchanges," Cathi Kendra said. "We have other goals but right now we are working on the bookstore aspect."

Other women involved in Fine Print are Laurie "Squirrel" Reitmanis, Kelly Vinopal, Gwen Meister, and Sue Tyrrel. A new innovation, used to present a relaxed and informal atmosphere, is free herbal tea, Laurie Reitmanis said.

Fine Print will be selling its inventory of new and used books and used records until the end of September.