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Artists develop studio space in Richards Hall basement

By Vicki Ruhga

Richards Hall basement was designed to be used as a storage area for the mechanical engineering department. Since 1974, however, it has been used as private studio space for UNL artists.

Dan Howard, art department chairman, said the north end of the basement is used as classroom space for the crafts department, and the central and south areas are studios for sculpture students.

"Very little was done to convert the areas," Howard said. "They swept up a little dirt and put up temporary partitions of plywood or other scrap materials."

Howard said that until the mechanical engineering department changed buildings, the basement had been used mainly for chemical storage. At one time, radioactive properties were stored there, he said.

"There is no radioactive residue left," Howard said. "A couple of years ago, there were some rumors about it, so the Department of Health and Safety brought in a man to check it out."

Howard said the most radioactive thing found was his painting palette, on which he had used lead paints.

Mark Hendricks, a painting and sculpture major, is one of seven people who has studio space in Richards Hall basement.

"My studio was a water tank used for hydraulic water experiments," Hendricks said. "The tank was filled up with water which was pumped upstairs for experi-

ments, and it trickled back down into the tank."

The only change made for his studio was a door cut into the tank, he said. The pipe fittings are still sticking out of the walls, he said.

"Spatially, the studio fits my needs. I am glad to get any space."

However, Hendricks said he thinks that a few improvements could be made to make the studios safer from thefts which have occurred in Richards Hall a few times.

Stronger plywood walls and running water, which is not available in most studios, would be helpful for students painting or using clay, he said.

Mary Beth Fogarty, a first semester sculpture student who previously worked as an artist, also has a studio space.

Her studio has a wrought iron spiral staircase, so she can see her sculptures from above.

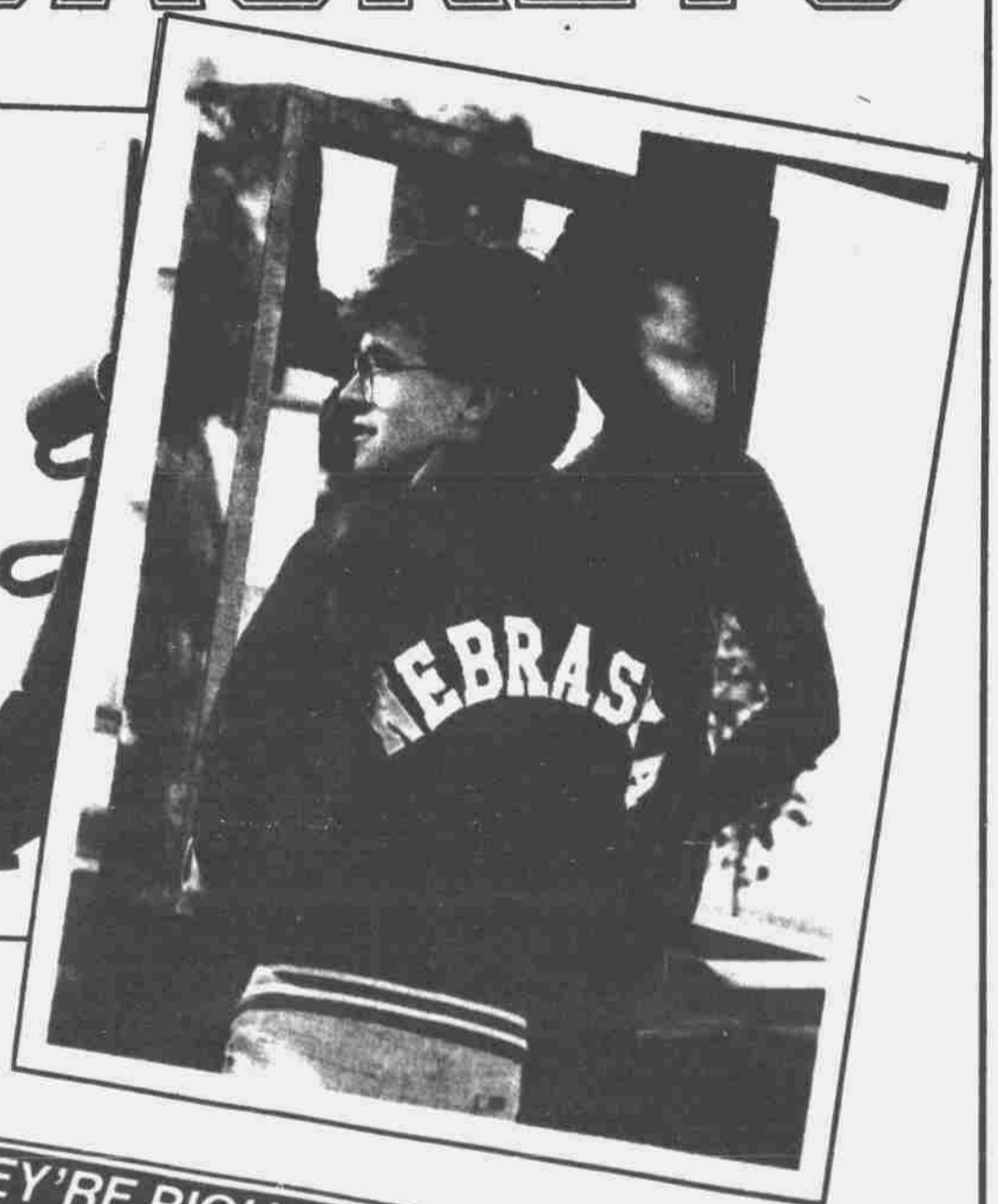
"My studio is exactly the way artists' studios look in New York City," she said.

Fogarty said the basement is also good for studio space because of its lower level access.

"We can just drive a truck in, unload it and drive back out," she said. "It is really adequate for hauling steel and welding equipment."

Fogarty said her studio could use more lighting, but she usually brings her own spot lamps. There is also plenty of storage space, she said.

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