

Sculptures receive varied comments

By Adi Asenaca Caucau
Staff Reporter

The 26 outside sculptures on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus are worth several million dollars.

The pieces are invaluable and could not be replaced, said George Neubert, director of Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

"To put a price on the pieces would distort its meaning and it is not fair to the artist or to the experience of the work," Neubert said.

The Sheldon sculpture gardens have 21 sculptures, insured and bolted down to prevent them from being stolen. Security guards patrol the area to protect the valuable pieces.

Four sculptures by UNL art student Terry Hager are in the area around Richards Hall. A sculpture by Ann Sperry, another art student, is on East Campus.

About two weeks ago a fifth sculpture by Hager was stolen from outside Richards Hall, said Douglas Ross, director of the art department gallery.

In the sculpture gardens, two of the more notable pieces, Elie Nadelman's "Man in the Open Air" and David Smith's "Superstructure on Four," are being moved inside for the 100 American Masterworks exhibition to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Nebraska Art Association, which begins in October.

Three additional sculptures "Crib," "Post" and "Hitch" are on from Mac Homeker. The Sheldon Advisory Committee, together with the Nebraska Art Association, help coordinate volunteer programs and raise money for the acquisition, exhibition and conservation of artwork. The latest acquisition is "Old Glory" by Mark di Suvero, in front of Hamilton Hall. This sculpture is about 35 feet high, 30 feet wide and 12 feet deep. It consists of 10 tons of steel beams, painted "International Red."

The artist, Mark di Suvero, has described his sculpture as "painting in three dimensions with a crane as my paintbrush."

"Old Glory" will remain on the grounds until the Lied Center for Performing Arts is completed in 1990, when it will be placed in the center's plaza.

To fully comprehend its experience as a complement to the environment, "Old Glory" must be explored physically, Neubert said. It exudes a heroic energy and stands as a symbol of strength and power, he said.

"This work is a monumental example of this community's proud accomplishments within a tradition of excellence and it extends the Sheldon's role/responsibility of introducing the art of the 20th century to our community by the 20th century to the walls of the Sheldon Art Gallery," Neubert said.

Other observers are not as impressed with "Old Glory." Of more than 10 students interviewed near "Old Glory" on Sept. 24, 25 and 29, none said he or she liked the sculpture. Although most said it was impressive but did not fit the environment.

"This is unique but somehow it does not seem to fit in with the green and country environment," said Stanley Smith, a UNL criminal justice major.

While some students said they do not enjoy looking at "Old Glory," several said they like the sculpture gardens.

Amie DeFrain, a UNL freshman journalism major who sits in the sculpture gardens on sunny days, said she likes Richard Miller's "Sandy In Defined Space" and Lucchesi's "Pieta."

"The pieces stick in my mind and they are realistic," DeFrain said.

Art historian Sidney Geist, said in a Sheldon Art Gallery newsletter that "di Suvero's art is so ambitious and intelligent, so raw and clean, so noble and accessible, that it must permanently alter our standards of artistic effort."

Jim French, design draftsman for grounds at UNL, said that some of the pieces are nice, but he

questioned the integrity of a few. "Old Glory" seems cold and does not belong where it is, he said.

The sculptures are displayed outside on campus to expose students to aesthetics, to broaden the student's experience and to introduce ideas and issues that students may not encounter in traditional classroom experience, Neubert said.

Great art cannot be tested in a popularity contest, he said. Art appreciation takes experience and time, said Neubert, who hopes students will change and grow in their knowledge and understanding of the arts.

Judy Cherry, a graduate student in art who teaches fundamentals of design at UNL, took her students on a tour of Sheldon sculpture gardens Tuesday and heard varied comments from her students. She said she wanted her students to look at the sculptures in relationship to the work that they do in class.



"Garden of Delights," left, by Ann Sperry, located on East Campus and "Leaning Pieces," by Tony Rosenthal, located outside Richards Hall.

Andrea Hoy/Daily Nebraskan

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