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Shells designed in landlocked state

SHELLS from page 10

shop on campus.

But the success of Furlong's business is visible in more than just her expanded line.

"I have this dream studio," she said of the turn-of-the-century warehouse she has turned into a comfortable, artistic workplace for her staff.

Furlong bought the warehouse after moving to Salem, and Thomas Laging, professor of architecture at UNL, went to Oregon to help her design the new interior in a post-modern style that preserved the old brick flavor of the building, she said.

She named it Carriage House Studio after her original workplace in Lincoln.

Furlong said it's interesting that she began designing with shells in a state so far from the ocean.

"I had to move to Oregon to sort of legalize my shell designs," she jokes with friends.

Yet her years in Nebraska were inspiring, Furlong said. She became a Christian the year she began her ornaments. The beliefs she had just taken on and the emotions she was feeling that Christmas season undoubtedly influenced her work, she said.

Now that her Christmas angels and wreaths are being mass-produced, Furlong considers them to be designs rather than art. But she



Margaret Furlong

continues to work on her other interests and finds inspiration in her four-year-old daughter Caitlin and the environment of Oregon.

Furlong said doing landscapes became hard when she first moved west. Oregon has fewer open spaces than Nebraska, she said, and she felt a bit claustrophobic in the heavily wooded environment.

But although she loved Nebraska, "we have a new love now

in Oregon." This fall, for example, she began working on some landscapes of the northwest part of the state. And she does colorful pastel and watercolor pieces on yearly trips to Hawaii.

So while she is busy most of the time putting her ideas into her ornaments and their packaging, her landscapes are different.

"I do those just for myself," she said.

Doug Carroll/Daily Nebraskan

Stores nationwide are trying to predict what the season's hot-selling toys will be

NEW YORK (AP) — You can be certain of two things at this time of year: Christmas is coming, and the children of America will find scads of gift-wrapped toys under ornament-laden trees.

But no one — not toymakers, store-owners or Wall Street analysts — is sure just what those toys will be. Unlike past Christmases, there are no "mega-hits" in sight, such as last year's Lazer Tag, or Teddy Ruxpin in 1985.

Many toys for which manufacturers had high hopes early in the year have either flopped or never made it to market because of production problems.

And many stars of the past — such as Lazer Tag and Pound Puppies — have lost their shine and retailers are marking them down to clear the way for new merchandise.

With these problems, 1987 has been a disappointment for much of the toy industry. Sales and earnings have fallen off sharply and some toymakers — most notably Worlds of Wonder Inc., which says it may seek a merger with another company — have been hurt badly.

With sales down, many retailers have bought cautiously for this Christmas, and that could mean popular toys are in short supply, said Paul Valentine, a toy industry analyst with Standard & Poor's Corp.

"This is going to be the toughest year to find the toys you want since 1983," when there were not enough of the hottest toys to go around, Valentine said.

But their is a possible silver lining to that cloud. If demand remains high, the toy industry could see a stronger 1988.

"Shortages are a stimulant for the toy industry," said Valentine. "It tends to increase the attractiveness of specific toys in consumers' minds."

However, noting that talking dolls were popular last Christmas but fizzled afterward, Valentine cautioned that early 1988 sales could still go flat.

A more immediate worry for many retailers — whether the stock market

crash will affect consumer spending — is of little concern to the toy business.

"Despite all the doom and gloom you may hear, on Dec. 25 the holiday is going to be celebrated and when the children come down in the morning and look under the tree, they're going to find lots of gaily wrapped boxes," said David Leibowitz, an analyst with American Securities Corp. "The children of America will not be denied."

Among the toys they'll find will be a few perennial favorites and some new variations on old themes.

Video games, which are in the midst of a comeback, are expected to be big sellers, led by Nintendo Entertainment System, one of the top toys so far this year. Analysts also expect Captain Power, an interactive video game by Mattel Inc., to be a best seller.

High-tech toys, including talking dolls, have largely been a disappointment this year. But analyst Valentine predicts several will have a successful Christmas, including the talking version of Coleco Industries Inc.'s Cabbage Patch Kids, which he says have "met with a successful initial response."

Two other talking dolls that have sold well are Worlds of Wonder Inc.'s Julie, a doll that can read special books and tell the difference between hot and cold, and Mattel Inc.'s Heather, a doll whose vocabulary matures like that of a child, analysts said.

Talking characters such as Mickey Mouse and Mother Goose by Worlds of Wonder have sold well, said Angela Bourdon, a spokeswoman for Toys R Us, the nationwide toy store chain. Worlds of Wonder's Teddy Ruxpin, although a relative toy veteran, also is said to be doing well.

Valentine said he expects Coleco's talking Alf, a plush version of the NBC-TV show character, to be popular, as it has been all year.

Mr. Gameshow, an interactive board game by Lewis Galoob Toys Inc., featuring an animated, wisecracking "host," is not turning out to be as big a hit as expected, but should still do well, Valentine said.

However, most of the items indus-

try watchers expect to be on gift lists are much simpler, more basic toys. "The early trends suggest that people are looking for traditional rather than faddy" toys, said Peter Harris, the president of F.A.O. Schwarz, the Manhattan-based toy store chain.

Board games such as Scrabble and Trivial Pursuit, by Coleco's Selchow & Righter division, are expected to sell well.

Pictionary, the most popular board game this year, also is expected to be as big at Christmas, said Rick Anguilla, editor of Toy & Hobby World, a trade publication. The brainchild of a new company, Games Gang, Ltd., Pictionary is played like charades, but on paper.

F.A.O. Schwarz reports kaleidoscopes are big movers, and Toys R Us says scooters are on their list of top sellers.

Staples like Mattel's Barbie and Hasbro Inc.'s G.I. Joe — which have been on best-seller lists all year — also are expected to be under a lot of Christmas trees.

So are some toys ostensibly designed for children, but which may be a bigger hit with adults. Valentine points out two: Gotcha by L.J.N. Toys Ltd. and Coleco's Couch Potato.

Gotcha, based on adults' survival games, includes a gun and pellets that platter washable dyes on whoever is in the line of fire.

Couch Potato, a play on the sedentary lifestyles of many Americans, is a stuffed figure wrapped in its own sack. F.A.O. Schwarz said it has already sold out of the toys and has ordered more.

Fischer-Price, a company not usually associated with hit toys, is having a strong year and should have a good Christmas with its line of preschool toys, analysts said. The company's Fun With Food, a set of plastic fake food toys, has been a hot item and likely will be in short supply this season, Anguilla said.

Fischer-Price also is marketing a video camera and recorder for children, which retails for about \$225. The analysts were split on how successful it would be, but Toys R Us listed it among its top-selling toys.