

Sheldon director hopes gallery's expansion takes off

By John Heurtz
Staff Reporter

There's a model on display in the Grand Hall of the Sheldon Art Gallery.

It looks just like Sheldon at first, except there's an underground wing off to the west. In it are scaled down paintings and paper cutouts of human observers.

This model is a plan for expanding the Gallery.

Although a time table for the new wing's construction hasn't been set, Sheldon Director George Neubert said he hopes the project will become a "priority" for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The need and concept for an expansion has been around for at least a decade, Neubert said. Actual planning and designing goes back about six years.

When Neubert came to UNL in 1983, museum expansion was a priority, he said. But the Lied Center for Performing Arts put the Sheldon project on the back burner.

In 1983, Neubert oversaw a new set of drawings, some alterations and the building of the model now on display.

"There is a new awareness in education, in universities, in soci-

ety at large that art is more than just an activity," Neubert said. "Art is more than just a product. In fact it is a tool for enlightenment and education.

"In specialized fields, most of what you learn in the classroom is outdated by the time you get on the job... educators and higher learning is beginning to realize that it's not so much what we teach students but that we prepare them for life — not for a career. We in the community have experienced that the Sheldon's collection provides that opportunity.

"The role of the gallery... I think, now is understood as something that is an important experience for students as they prepare for life."

The new space will provide more flexibility for the kinds of shows that the Sheldon attracts. Sheldon officials will use the original building to display the gallery's growing permanent collection.

Behind the scenes of the new addition will be a research library and a new storage facility. Students will be able to check out paintings for studying within designated areas.

The Sheldon Art Gallery operates on a budget set by UNL officials. But most of the money for the

building and for the collection comes from private donations.

Fund raising has been delayed since the Lied Center project began. Neubert said he hopes that the Sheldon expansion drive can get underway now that the Lied Center is almost complete.

Neubert said that there are always going to be people criticizing the way money is spent. But he added that opposition comes from

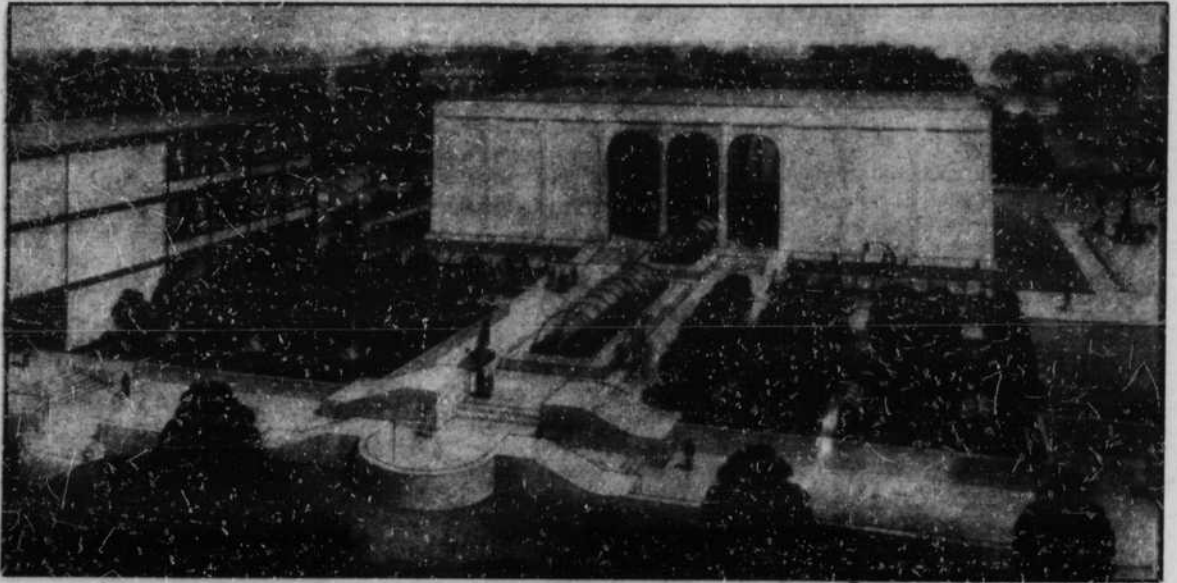
a naivete about how the gallery acquires money.

"I was not against the recent fund drive for the football club," Neubert said. "A lot of my friends complained. There was just some opposition to the football team.

"First of all, it's their money. They raised it. Second of all, the money that people gave to football wasn't going to come to me any-

way. I know better than that. Anybody who thinks that they would have gotten (the money) for something else is naive. They don't know enough about donors and the way things are done in the real world of private dollars.

"Someone who wants to give to football is going to give to football. If they want to give to football and science, and Sheldon, they will."



Courtesy of Sheldon Art Gallery
Architects rendition of an underground wing to Sheldon Art Gallery.

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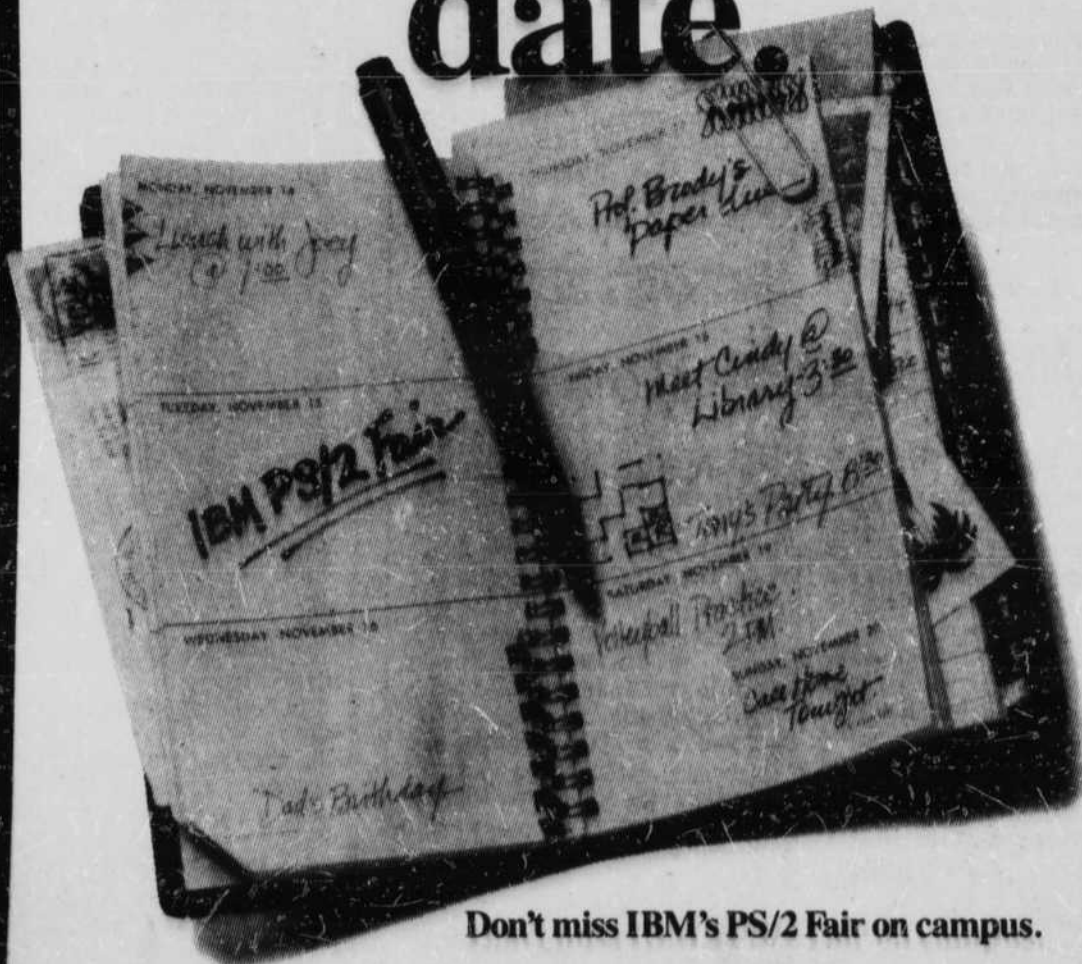
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