

Midwestern artists show work in Sheldon

By Trevor McArthur
Staff Reporter

There's something unique about the Midwest.

art REVIEW

While every region has something that sets it apart from the rest of the nation, for the rest of this semester, visitors to Lincoln's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery can see the physical manifestations of this region's uniqueness.

"Midwestern Visions: Constructed Realities" is one of the four shows at the Sheldon Gallery this fall. It is a presentation of works by seven artists who make their home and their art in the Midwest.

Apart from this, the works bear little similarity to one another.

The subtitle "Constructed Realities" refers to the general classification of the works as constructions.

Not just paintings and not just sculptures, each one seems to involve some amount of painting, sculpting and other crossover methods of creation.

Granite pushes in one corner of a painting, painted thorns stick out of one wooden star while feathers protrude from another star, and some works defy brief explanation of even the most superficial kind.

Several of the artists displayed were at a reception for both this show and another gallery show of paintings by University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor of art Keith Jacobshagen.

Three of the "Midwestern Visions" artists were available to share their experiences and feelings about art.

Jeff Freeman is an associate professor of art at the University of South Dakota. He has lived in North and South Dakota, as well as Minnesota, and has attended school in Minnesota, North Dakota and Wisconsin. He said the biggest influence was a man named Hans Hoffman.

Freeman is so much in simply what the work looks like, but in how he talked,

how he thought," Freeman said. Hoffman had what Freeman describes as a "push-pull" theory, and said that a person is a dynamic rather than static force bounded by polar opposites.

"I thought, 'my God, that makes sense to me,'" Freeman said. He said he felt things were changing every second, and Hoffman's art summed up things that Freeman was thinking about.

"I gradually found a way of using what he was talking about in my own way," Freeman said.

Through his artistic creations, Freeman said he tries to blur the audience's expectations of the boundaries between the various fields.

Instead of blurring actual distinctions, he labels something a painting but gives it three dimensions, he said.

"I want a work to be not a definition, but a catalyst, something to raise a reaction," Freeman said.

Warren Rosser is another artist exhibited at the show. Of all the works on display, Rosser's probably come closest to traditional sculpture. The Kansas City, Mo., dweller is the chairman of the painting department of the Kansas City Art Institute.

Rosser said he has met both innovative composer John Cage and pioneering engineer and architect R. Buckminster Fuller in London, and enjoyed their adventurous spirits, but that his direct artistic influences came from legendary artists such as Picasso and Duchamp.

"I think the artists that one finds in museums . . . become a major influence," Rosser said.

The title of one of his displayed pieces, "Questor — Stripped by Her Bachelor's Even," refers to a work by Duchamp.

Similar to Freeman, Rosser describes his work as dealing in opposites.

"Male, Female; thin, fat; dense, solid; open, closed. They're really about trying to reflect on one's own thought process," Rosser said.

As an example he points to his other work on display, "Spirit



Stephanie Cannon/Daily Nebraskan

Catcher."

"There are male forms and female forms. There are things set in opposition to each other. I think in all of us we have aspects that don't mesh, don't, sort of, fit together, we struggle with our own identity. These pieces, I guess, are in my own way an attempt to sort of . . . maybe try and understand the various sides, various aspects of myself," Rosser said.

John Spence, from Lincoln, is a film and video maker as well as a still photographer. These are the main areas of the arts he works in, but on display in the show are several of the star constructions he began building two years ago.

"One of the problems with trying to be a filmmaker is that making films does not have that kind of immediate, tactile sense of accomplishment," Spence said. "Films tend to stretch out over a period of years before you actually get something done. The beauty of making stars is they're

immediate. I can make them every night and can jam things together. I can paint. I glue. I can saw. So there's a very immediate kind of sense of accomplishment."

Spence said he doesn't know why he began using stars as the basic shape for his works, except perhaps that he found them easy to draw as a child and he is fond of them now. But their shapes are not as important to him as what he does with them.

"As a photographer, I've spent years, literally years, out in the countryside, looking, making photographs," Spence said. "There are many other things in the countryside that I like, that I see, that appeal to me, that I really can't put in the photograph."

"So the trick became, what are you going to do with it? What are you going to make out of it? So it becomes a process of just sitting there and looking at all the stuff you have, that you picked up. A couple of the stars

are made out of beaver skins and feathers, things that I've had around for a long time."

George Neubert, director of the Sheldon Gallery and curator of this show, said he has had many people give him positive responses to "Midwestern Visions."

"We've had more student response, I think, sometimes, than other shows," Neubert said. "I think that's partly because of the issues and ideas and the variety of materials. I think that there's enough to look at and interact with both idea-wise and material-wise."

As to what ties the works together, there is some agreement and a little disagreement.

Freeman said it is hard to say there is something specifically Midwestern about the style of the work but that Midwestern art is protected from the coastal winds of fashion.

See MIDWEST on 10

'A Chinese Ghost Story' worth a fun scare

By Micki Haller
Senior Editor

movie REVIEW

Probably the best escapist movie to come out since "Raiders of the Lost Ark" is not American.

The film isn't showing downtown, and it isn't even in English.

"A Chinese Ghost Story" is the latest offering dished up by Sheldon Film Theater's New Chinese Cinema festival.

The movie looks like it was directed by Steven Spielberg, George Lucas and the cream of the directorial crop.

Ning is a simple tax collector who makes a pilgrimage to a town to collect some money. Unfortunately, he hasn't got any for traveling expenses, and he asks the villagers where he can spend the night for free. They direct him to Lan Ro Temple.

Ning is an intelligent scholar, but he's lacking in common sense and basic physical coordination. When he

shows up at the Lan Ro Temple, a fight breaks out around him.

The men in black ignore him, but jump around doing amazing gymnastics and swinging swords.

By accident, he finds himself between an old warrior and a young, brash fighter.

The Ninja, or whatever they are, trade some nasty barbs, and Ning tries to placate them by telling them to love each other.

"Love conquers the world. Love is the most powerful weapon," Ning said.

"Get out of here," one warrior growls at him. "Your love can't save you."

Ning is allowed to duck out of the swordplay, and find a room in the deserted temple.

Then, the ghost appears in the window, just for a moment. And we see what's in the attic above Ning's room. Petrified mummy creatures hiss and crawl around on the floor, obviously excited at a tender young meal like Ning.

Meanwhile, the ghost has decided to take a bath in a nearby stream. One of the warriors sees her, and she seduces him. But in the middle of foreplay, she rings little bells on her ankle, and the man shrivels into a mummy creature.

Obviously, she's not the best girl to take out on a date, but she cries when she sees what has happened to her lover.

The old man races when he hears the bells, but he is too late. He decides to take care of the body, but when it starts making menacing moves on him, he annihilates it with a flaming spear.

The old man notes that there's not much difference between the warrior when he was alive, and when he was dead.

"You still fight when you're dead," he says.

The next major event is when Ning meets the ghost. She lures him to a temple with her siren song and lute-playing. He falls in love with her, but he's extremely shy.

"You're sick, you look pale," he said when she tries to kiss him. "You should see a doctor."

She asks him to carry her inside the temple, but he answers, "I can't. You're too heavy."

Frustrated, she makes him faint by her special powers, then tosses him into the pond beside the temple and flies off.

He comes to, sees her lute, and tries to return it to her.

Eventually, she falls in love with him also, and decides not to kill him. She tells him that she is under the power of an evil tree monster, which makes her kill men.

The old warrior, Swordmaster Yen, is against all ghosts, and tries to kill them with his special powers of Tao. But even he agrees to help this particular ghost.

The ghost combines all the elements of modern horror, the traditional Chinese ghost story, and the different Asian philosophies, but tells the tale with its tongue firmly planted in cheek.

The movie is incredibly funny, even if it is in another language. It's also horrifyingly scary, and has superb special effects. And the action

See GHOST on 10



Courtesy of Sheldon Film Theater

"A Chinese Ghost Story"