

Gestures to convey volumes

By Gerry Beltz
Senior Reporter

The Association of Institutes for Aesthetic Education, an international association, will meet Thursday through Saturday at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Teaching aesthetics is similar to teaching subjects such as mathematics or science, said David Bagby, assistant coordinator for Arts Are Basic. The Arts Are Basic program of the UNL College of Fine and Performing Arts is the conference host.

"In math or science the teacher has a textbook, which offers material and elements, which the teacher and students use," Bagby said. "We use performances as a text."

Aesthetics educators can pull elements out of a performance of theater, dance or music and study those elements in the classroom, he said.

"This year's conference will address the topic of global aesthetics, not just Eurocentric aesthetics."

The art of teaching aesthetics is tough to explain, Bagby said.

"Traditionally, art appreciation classes go to good plays or art museums and are told 'this is why it's good' with the idea as to why you should appreciate it," he said.

Bagby said the approach of aesthetics education is this: Students will look with new eyes and participate with a new mind if they have already actively explored an artwork before they see it.

Imagine watching a dancer's movements and gestures, which are used to convey the performer's message, Bagby said.

"A modern dance performance uses a vocabulary of gestures like we use words; they are put together to form a thought or message," he said.

Students explore by making gestures as a class to form a class vocabulary, Bagby said. By working with this physical vocabulary, they are challenged to change it in some way and do it again.

"What happens then is that the student has a real connection to the performance," he said, "because the

person that made the performance had to make hundreds of choices in making that performance, the same way the students had to make some choices in their exercises."

Aesthetics education is both artistic and logical, Bagby said.

"We very much look at the arts as an exercise in problem-solving."

The semi-annual conference will also be a time for AIAE members to meet and exchange information on events and performances in their respective areas, Bagby said.

"Each institute's programs has certain events for use in the schools in their area."

This conference will also feature a meeting to discuss organizational issues and the formation of more groups like Arts Are Basic, Bagby said.

Highlights of the conference include a performance and discussion of "Your Move," an Arts Are Basic-commissioned work that combines theater, dance and music, and a performance by jazz and African percussionist Kahil El'Zabar Friday.

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Midwest author reads work

By Elizabeth Gamboa
Staff Reporter

Tom Averill, a Midwestern writer and jack-of-all-trades, will read one of his short stories at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln tonight.

The reading will take place at 7:30 in the English lounge in Andrews Hall. This will be Averill's first appearance in Lincoln.

Averill is the writer-in-residence and an English professor at Washburn University in Topeka, Kan. He gives two or three readings a year at universities.

A regional writer, Averill's short stories focus on the Midwest and its people.

"I'm interested in the history and local culture of the Midwest," Averill said. "I write about it because it's what I know."

Although Averill was born in California, he has lived in the Mid-

west for most of his life. He earned degrees at the University of Kansas in Lawrence and the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

He tries to project an accurate image of the Midwest, he said.

"I don't have any particular image other than what it is truly," Averill said. "I don't act like it's the greatest place on earth or the biggest dump on earth."

Averill said his writing had been influenced by Eudora Welty, another regional writer, and William Stafford, a fellow Kansas writer.

In college, Averill decided to become a writer because he enjoyed English classes and did well in them.

"I wasn't doing anything else very well. I was supposed to be a doctor," he said.

Averill has published two collections of short stories titled "Passes at the Moon" and "Seeing Mona Naked." He said he preferred to write short stories be-

cause of his limited time for writing and because they were more intense than novels.

He has written two unpublished novels and edited the book "What Kansas Means to Me: Twentieth Century Writers on the Sunflower State."

In addition to his writing career, Averill has his own radio show on National Public Radio called "William Jennings Bryan Oleander." He said the show was done from the perspective of an old man from one of his previous stories.

"I had written a good character into a bad novel, so I decided to do some more writing in the voice of the character," he said.

In May, filming will begin on Averill's screenplay, "Seeing Mona Naked."

Today, Averill will read a new short story that will be published soon in Doubletake, a Duke University magazine.

Film kindles compassion for victims of urban blast

By Sean McCarthy
Film Critic

Tracing the underlying causes of the 1965 Watts riots and the 1992 Los Angeles riots may take more than 90 minutes, but director Randy Holland manages to do it with his documentary, "The Fire This Time."

Using research and interviews conducted over more than a year, Holland's documentary makes no mistake as where to lay blame for the anguish of unemployment, poverty and gang activity.

The social and economic divisions between the members of the Los Angeles community are at the core of South Central's problems, according to Holland.

He also partially blames FBI involvement for preventing peace among rival gangs and the shutdown of active civil rights groups of the 1960s and '70s.

Other conspiracies that Holland weaves into his investigation include how guns are readily available to anyone who wants one in South Central Los Angeles. In one scene, locals point to a train that contains boxes of guns and ammunition. The moving train inexplicably halts in their area. While the train is stopped, locals collect the cargo with no resistance.

Most of his powerful statements are supported by testimony from people ranging from civil rights leaders to gang bangers. Betty Shabazz (Malcolm X's widow), Bobby Lavender (founder of the Bloods street gang) and actual residents of South Central are among the people Holland interviewed.

Investigating the causes of the riots of 1965 and 1992, Holland goes

The Facts

Film: "The Fire This Time"

Director: Randy Holland

Grade: B

Five Words: A powerful look at urban despair.

back to before the 1900s for his research.

Shots of burnt buildings, houses with barbed wires and barred windows give the watcher a sense of the helplessness felt in the area. Though Holland points out this despair, he also shows that people in the area often overcome their surroundings.

This is especially evident in Holland's piece on the 1960s radical groups.

That hope was quickly destroyed by assassinations and FBI involvement that destroyed the Black Panther movement, according to Holland.

As despairing as "The Fire This Time" is, the ending is uplifting. Holland shows that the peace rival gang members forged in the 1990s has made a positive impact on the community. More importantly, he stresses how crucial it is that all races work together to finally resolve the despair so accurately depicted in this documentary.

"The Fire This Time" will play today through Saturday at the Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater in Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. A short feature, "Assimilation/a simulation," directed by Windy Chien will play before "The Fire This Time."

Concert

Continued from Page 12 words.

And it only got better. The most touching voices of all were Saliers' and Ray's own. Ray lays her voice out mighty and soulful, thick, full and unstoppable. Before each number, she lowers her brows and gathers her strength like Moses' mother just before she sent him down the Nile in a basket.

Saliers answers like a ghost, trembling, spirited strong. Their voices blend and separate like smoke, pungent and sweet. And the audience takes deep gulping breaths.

Both women sing hard. Their faces strain, and sometimes it seems their voices will break free of their bodies and level the auditorium in one delightful blow.

If you listen, you see why everyone knows the words. On good days, Saliers and Ray's lyrics put Shakespeare to shame.

The show swelled into an awesome encore where Saliers and Ray took their achingly beautiful "Touch Me Fall" through a swamp of passion, keening guitars and Neil Young poetry.

They'd stopped in Lincoln and invited an auditorium full of people to share their softest whisper secrets.

And everyone listening Wednesday night promised not to tell.

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