

Bobcat display revamped, features hands-on education

By FRED POYNER
Art Critic

Details, details and still more details marked Sunday's opening of the newly renovated Bobcat display at the University of Nebraska State Museum's Hall of Nebraska Wildlife.

As one of the first such displays planned for a face-lift, the Bobcat exhibit now features a skeleton mold of the animal imbedded in "stone," additional birds, insects and plants native to the Bobcat's environment and more aesthetic refinements to the area, such as indirect lighting and painting of the Nebraska landscape.

Patricia Freeman, curator of zoology at Morrill Hall, provided an overview of the project after the weekend

opening, in which she discussed the future scope of the exhibit renovations.

Eventually, the entire Hall of Wildlife will be revised according to the new look of the Bobcat display, which draws the visitor in with its construction and its emphasis on physical interaction. Newly added touch buttons that trigger bird calls, as well as the durability of the Bobcat skeleton to visitor contact, make this type of interaction an enjoyable and educational experience.

At the display's opening, Museum Director James Estes stressed the important role teamwork played in the timely completion of the display. The combination of museum volunteers, staff, faculty and student interns has resulted in a standard which will continue as work on the rest of the wildlife exhibits continues in the future.

Antiques recovered, sold at charity

BEIJING (AP) — Six antiques belonging to the widow of a former Chinese president — her only possessions salvaged from the ravages of Mao Tse-tung's radical followers — were sold at auction Tuesday for \$68,000.

Wang Guangmei decided to put the five porcelain pieces and an ivory brush holder up for sale to benefit a charity that helps poor peasant mothers find jobs, said her daughter, Liu Ting.

Wang's elegance is legendary, and was believed to have inspired jealous rage in Mao's wife, Jiang Qing. But the 75-year-old Wang, once jailed as a spy, stays out of the spotlight and did not attend the auction put on by her daughter's company.

"She never comes to these things," Liu said.

The actioned pieces were gifts from Wang's wealthy capitalist family when she married Communist revolutionary Liu Shaoqi in 1948.

Nineteen years later, President Liu became the target of Communist Party Chairman Mao's purges during the Cultural Revolution. Youthful supporters known as Red Guards ransacked Wang and Liu's home and dragged the couple away for interrogation.

Wang spent 11 years in prison. She did not know until after her release in 1978 that Liu had died in 1969 — denied medical treatment as "the No. 1 capitalist roader" and a "lackey of imperialism."

After Wang's release, the government returned the six small items from her dowry.

Wang's pieces — a 1,000-year-old Song Dynasty porcelain bowl, and two bowls, two plates and the

brush holder from the Qing, China's last dynasty — were among the few items that attracted spirited bidding at Sungari International's auction.

With relics from 5,000 years of history, China has many artifacts to sell and the Communist government has been keen to cash in on the business. Auction houses have sprouted up in recent years, and Chinese, newly rich from 18 years of capitalist-style economic reforms, have become prime buyers.

The company put about 800 paintings, porcelains and other relics up for sale Monday and Tuesday. Many expensive items, such as 2,500-year-old bronzes, were withdrawn because of lackluster bidding. A 200-year-old silver-and-wood bowl sold for \$26,500, 50 percent more than its estimated worth.

Newspaper Open Air out of business

NEW YORK (AP) — Open Air, a quirky newspaper created by an eccentric multimillionaire, is out of business after five money-losing months, although its publisher promised Tuesday that it will return in January.

Staffers arriving Monday found the office doors padlocked and signs posted in the hallway announcing they were "terminated, effective immediately." Fifty employees lost their jobs without warning.

Publisher Abe Hirschfeld said there had been tremendous problems with distribution, and that he and the paper's editors clashed over its content and financial plan.

"I told them, 'If you don't want to follow the plan, why don't you open your own newspapers?'" Hirschfeld said Tuesday.

Hirschfeld, who made his fortune in real estate, said he could write one thing that his staff could not: "Checks."

He said he will bring a new version of Open Air back in January.

Open Air was atypical, with no editorial page, no op-ed page, and no letters column. Readers could write their own obituaries for as little as \$50. Editors were not allowed to change stories.

It debuted June 13, selling for 50 cents. Hirschfeld said he hoped to sell 100,000 copies, but acknowledged today that circulation was between 20,000 and 25,000. He acknowledged it lost money but wouldn't give figures.

The paper was born as Open Air PM, but distribution problems prompted it to switch to morning publication and drop the "PM" from its name in late summer.

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