

ALIEN CULTURE: The McCarthy Era

'AlieNation' parallels '50s with science fiction

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Senior editor

Atom bombs, soldiers marching, atom bombs, soldiers marching, eyes widened in horror, a '50s couple locked in a kiss.

The barrage of slide images is fast and frantic, and it relays one man's passion.

The object of Christian Seichter's obsession, "alieNation," opens with a free show tonight at 8 in Burnett Hall, Room 115. It brings a year's worth of work to fruition.

Seichter, a UNL English major and exchange student from Germany, has fashioned a lavish, two-hour multimedia event.

It focuses on the 1950s and parallels the decade with science-fiction movie still frames and clips, accompanied by a backdrop of haunting music and voice-overs.

The arrangement focuses on the feelings of estrangement and tension that gripped the United States in the 1950s. The alienation that swept the nation, Seichter said, corresponds directly with science fiction's popularity.

People went to movies to watch aliens on the screen, and in reality, the isolation they felt daily made them aliens to each other.

The communist witch hunt of former Sen. Joseph McCarthy and racial tension perpetuating a fear of anything foreign contributed to the feelings of detachment, he said.

Seichter said his goal was to communicate these feelings using science fiction and historical images from the era.

He began work on the slide show last year in Germany. It began as a 20-minute slide presentation for a class.

When he got to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in August, he knew he could find a wealth of pictures and film clips he didn't have access to in Germany, so he began to expand the show's size.

The show encompasses more than 500 slides and 60 movie clips, and it features a homemade soundtrack. It will utilize two large screens: one for slides, one for film clips.

"I want to confront people with so many different visual impacts that they are kind of disturbed," he said.

Slides and movie clips run simultaneously at times during the presentation, and the science-fiction film images work to parallel the historical stills in style and content.

Seichter believes every science-fiction film in the '50s relates some-

how to U.S. history and reflects fears prevalent to the time.

"I see the science-fiction films of the '50s as a very important subtext to understand what was going on (politically) in the '50s," he said.

"I try to find a connection between what is going on in science fiction and what was going on in reality."

For example, in most sci-fi movies, a prophetic figure warns of impending danger. Seichter's historical connection is anti-communist activist McCarthy.

"An audience of Americans (in the '50s) in a 3-D show all wearing 3-D glasses was one of the most frightening pictures I've ever seen."

CHRISTIAN SEICHTER
creator of 'alieNation'

Americans (in the '50s) in a 3-D show all wearing 3-D glasses was one of the most frightening pictures I've ever seen," he said.

It appears about 15 times in the presentation and is startling, he said, because the movie viewers appear sinister and alien, with the 3-D glasses serving as strange masks.

Co-sponsoring the presentation is the Lincoln Fantasy and Science Fiction Club. Though Seichter is not a member of the club, he said this project gave him and the club a chance to help each other.

The president of the club, UNL sophomore geology major Erik Weiss, said he hopes the presentation will help boost membership of the organization.

Seichter said he is looking forward to his life returning to normal after the onetime screening of "alieNation."

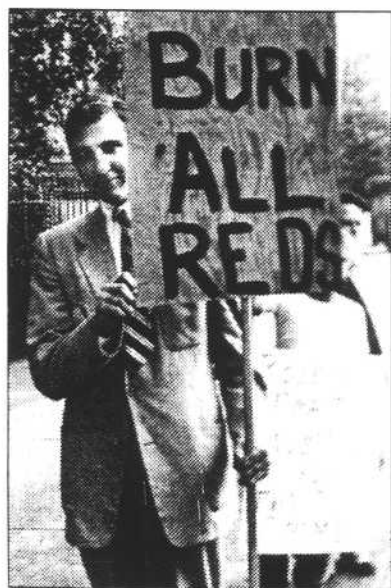
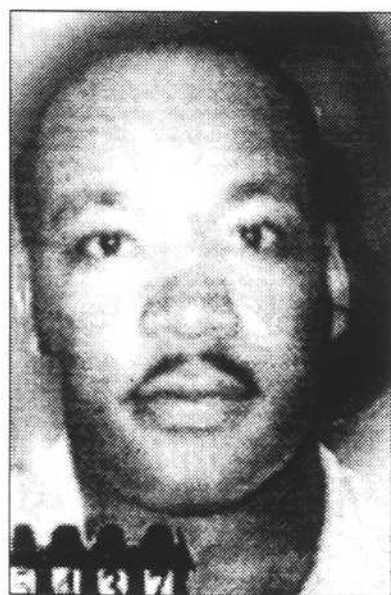
Then, maybe he will bring some furniture back into his residence hall room, where electronic equipment including a VCR and a slide projector take up some of the space where a bed used to be.

"My Cather room looks now like a complete mess," he said. "I rolled the bed out of my room, and I have about a hundred large books right now that take space, too."

"It looks like a combination of a science-fiction laboratory and a library."

But he has no plans to continue with this passion in the spring, during his final semester at UNL.

"I'm not going to make any more slide shows, because that's just crazy. I want to have time to see more of America."



Designers win kudos in fashion contest

BY LIZA HOLTMEIER
Staff writer

In the world of fashion, few would see Nebraska as a vanguard of modern-day style.

But in the land of Wrangler jeans and Cornhusker sports jackets, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design is creating academically acclaimed haute couture.

In November, the department had nine student and three faculty works represented at the International Design Competition, hosted by the International Textile and Apparel Association. Two of the works won Best of Show awards, an honor given to pieces that exhibit the most creative use of fabric and design.

Melinda Barton, a UNL senior textiles, clothing and design major, won Best of Show in the Student Division of the Wearable Art Category. Vince Quevedo, a UNL textiles, clothing and design lecturer, won Best of Show in the Faculty Division for a dress titled "Vex."

In "Vex," Quevedo used microscopic views of organic matter to design a dress made of heavyweight fabric.

Quevedo based his piece on a study he did of "Body In Space," a work by professor Young Hee Cho from Kent State University in Ohio. Cho's piece explored the galaxy as an art form.

"I really liked her approach and her philosophy in looking at other objects for inspiration," Quevedo said. "She uses microscopic means to find a different point of view."

Quevedo said his piece was more substantial in weight and appearance than Cho's, however. Quevedo used New Age fabrics such as vinyl and metallic netting, whereas Cho used all silk netting.

Quevedo said his design won because of its daringness.

"I'm not afraid to push buttons and to be on the cutting edge," he said.

Barton's piece, "Haiku Kimono," won her a Best of Show award. Barton's admiration of Japanese culture and art inspired her to create "Haiku Kimono," a gray silk kimono with flashes of pink in the lining.

Barbara Trout, an associate professor of textiles, clothing and design and one of Barton's instructors, said "Haiku Kimono" is unique in its fabrication and the way it integrates embellishment into the piece's structure. When light hits the piece, the fabric appears three-dimensional.

Trout said Barton's strengths lie in her ability to put colors and fabrications together in new and interesting ways.

"Her concepts are so unique that they alone make her work stand out," Trout said.

For instance, Barton once designed a wedding dress styled after the costume of a matador. The silk dress consisted of five pieces: a shirt, a vest, a cummerbund, pants and a detachable train.

Like the matador-influenced wedding gown, Barton's work at UNL has juxtaposed traditional cos-

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