

Artistic Differences

Nebraska celebrates its colors

Editor's note: Today's story serves as an introduction to a semesterlong series on the state of ethnic artistry in Nebraska. Every week we will focus on a particular artist or program dedicated to the diversification of state culture.

BY CHRISTOPHER HEINE
Staff writer

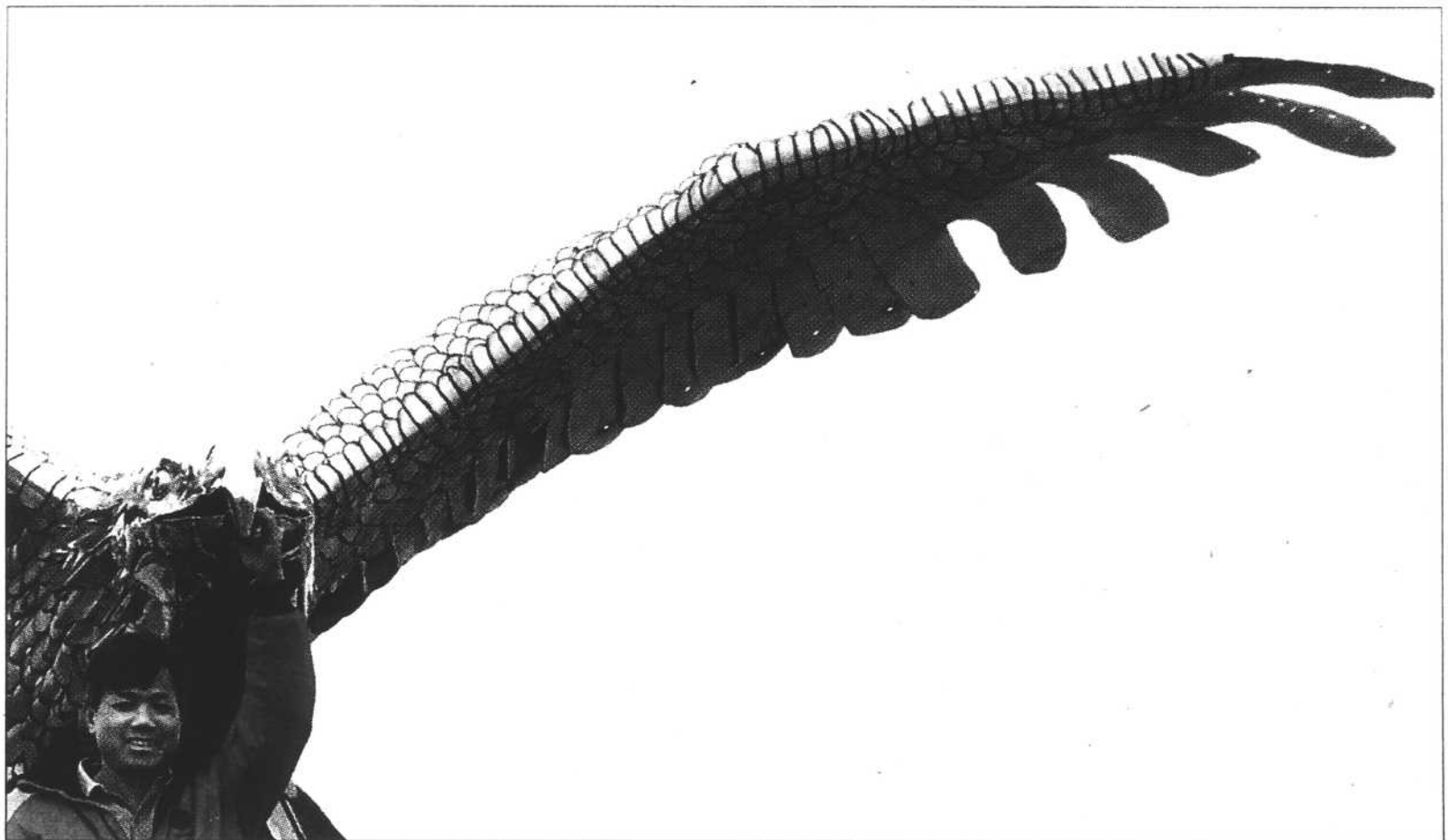
You know the popular national image of Nebraska — a state of pickup trucks with the tales of Shania Twain blaring through the AM radio.

This view is not only overly simple, but sad as well. Saddest of all is that many Nebraskans might actually believe it.

In actuality, Nebraska fosters much more than wheat, corn and common stereotypes; it also holds a kaleidoscope of artists from a variety of backgrounds.

People of every color and cultural influence are putting their stories to performances and galleries across the state.

Some are visiting artists-in-residence passing through grade school, high school and college halls as gypsies of the academic circuit. Others, like Juan Rodriguez, are making art happen in Nebraska.



IT TOOK LOI VO about a year to make his statue of the bald eagle that stands outside Lincoln Plating Co., 600 West E St. Vo also made two bald eagles with gold plating for Harley Davidson Company. MATT MILLER/DN

But most of the state has little idea.

Rodriguez, the coordinator of the children's dance troupe "Sabor Mexicano," said it's time for people to start taking notice.

"People here do not cherish the arts like they do in New York or other places on the coasts," he said. "Many of us are out here working the fields of art and not getting the needed exposure."

"Sabor Mexicano" does only authentic, Mexican dance routines. Last year, the group attended a seminar in Mexico and will do the same in 1999.

Rodriguez said that artistic diver-

sity educates many and makes minorities feel more valued.

"A lot of our youth today need to

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Alumni jewelry exhibition shows path of success

BY DIANE BRODERICK
Staff writer

On magazine pages and in the movies, Marv Graff's jewelry designs have been seen around the world.

And today through Feb. 11, Lincoln's Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery is featuring an alumni exhibition of his designs, entitled "Marv Graff: Fiber and Metal."

Graff, who received his bachelor's and master's of fine art degrees from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the '70s, will appear at the gallery for an artist's reception Friday from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

He is presenting a three-pronged exhibit that follows his career since his days at UNL up to his most recent work in New York. It includes pieces that have appeared in national magazines and been used in films such as "My Best Friend's Wedding."

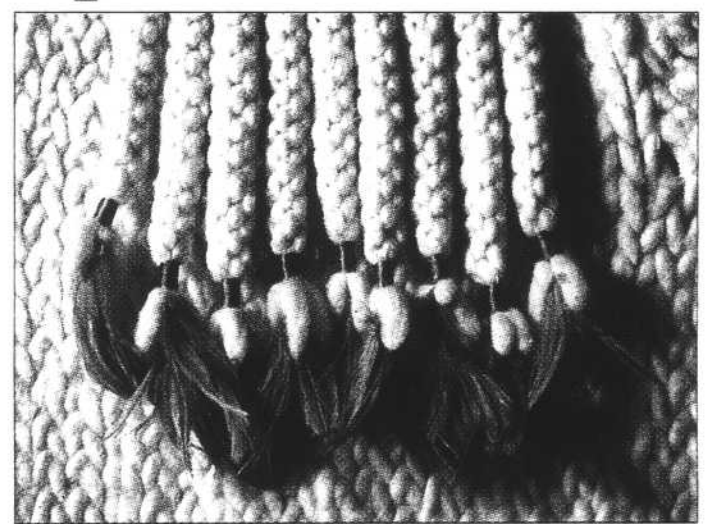
The first part contains early pieces, including elaborate accessories that he refers to as "wearable art," completed while he was earning his master's.

Upon graduation, he ended up at one of UNL's peer institutions.

"I taught at K-State University for a year and a half, and I was producing things I was selling to boutiques in New York while I was teaching," Graff said.

His commitment to production grew, and he moved to New York after his time at K-State.

The second part of the exhibit is dedicated to the designs Graff fashioned while building his career in New York, when he worked with established fashion and jewelry designers including Mary MacFadden and Miriam Haskell.



LEFT: MERV GRAFF, known for his contemporary jewelry designs, has returned to UNL for an alumni exhibition. Cara Humphry shows off one of the jewelry pieces featured in the show. TOP: THIS PATTERN comes from a sweater Graff created while still an undergraduate. SANDY SUMMERS/DN

During this period, in 1979, Graff won the prestigious Pre de Cache award for young designer of the year. Graff said the award was selected by fashion editors based on who they thought epitomized the fashion of the time.

Eventually Graff decided to open his own studio, which is the focus of the third section of the exhibit, consisting mainly of costume jewelry that

They have contacts with stores around the country," Graff said.

Graff also participates in what are known as trade shows, where buyers from around the country come to see and possibly buy artisans' work.

Part of the impetus for the Lincoln exhibition is Graff's family connection to the state.

He grew up in Shelby, and his sister Barbara

he's completed for Marv Graff Designs, located in New York.

"I hired representatives to sell, kind of like agents.

Trout is currently an associate professor of textiles, clothing and design at UNL as well as curator of this event.

It was "probably just coincidence" that landed the two in the same field, Graff said, but how he was raised may have had something to do with it.

"Our parents just always exposed us to a lot of cultural things; we were from a really small town, but we'd go to Omaha and spend a lot of time in Lincoln and travel occasionally," he said.

Trout said preparations for the exhibit have been going on for about a month.

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