

# Sheldon opens tribute to an underrated artist

■ The exhibition will celebrate a founder of the 'Magic Realism' movement and former Lincolnite Charles Rain.

BY JOSH KRAUTER  
Senior staff writer

A large bowl of fruits and vegetables and a glass of wine sit comfortably among ancient ruins.

Butterflies fly around the limb of a multicolored tree.

Ordinary objects are displayed in vivid color and odd contexts.

These scenes are all part of the dreamlike world of Charles Rain, a former Lincoln resident who was a primary example of the "Magic Realism" school of American surrealist painting.

Today, the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery opens an exhibit exploring Rain's work and the various genres in which he experimented.

Rain and his peers were heavily influenced by French avant-garde artists who migrated to New York in the early 20th century, many staying permanently after suffering Nazi aggression in the late 1930s.

"The French surrealists believed art needed to unlock unconsciousness," said Dan Siedell, curator of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

This belief inspired Rain and his American peers to develop their own surrealism: "Magic Realism." Rain used this term to describe the Americans' more traditional, less avant-garde style.

But Rain's surrealist works contained a few elements not found in the French style: romanticism and drama.

"He has a flair for drama in his paintings," Siedell said. "That drama can be communicated in his use of detail, light and dark and romantic and Gothic elements. He takes a romantic look back on cultures, focusing on romantic sensibilities."

Although artists such as Salvador Dali became famous with an aesthetic similar to Rain's, Rain often went unacknowledged.

Rain was largely ignored in his prime because of his willingness to swim against the artistic stream of the time, Siedell said.

"Rain is an artist that doesn't get attention because he doesn't fit stereotypes of what artists should be."

The Sheldon exhibit, "Charles Rain: Magic Realism," which runs until Nov. 21, will help to bring Rain's work more public attention.

Although a portion of Rain's work is always on display at the Sheldon, this collection contains an expanded selection of paintings that will be new to regular gallery visitors.

This exhibit is only part of the Sheldon's slate of Rain projects. Siedell said work is being done on a traveling exhibition of Rain's paintings, which will contain works borrowed from other galleries as well as the Sheldon's private collection.

A book-length Rain catalogue is also being prepared. Rain, who died in 1985, left more than enough art to fill a book.

"He painted well into his 70s,"



COURTESY PHOTO  
In "Architectural Still Life," Charles Rain combines everyday vegetables with ancient ruins in a way that defines his style of "Magic Realism."

Siedell said.

Much of his paintings contain recurring images, such as architectural elements, flowers, fruits and vegetables. These images remained even after he moved from surrealism to landscapes later in his life.

This move into new territory was characteristic of Rain, Siedell said. He wasn't afraid to try different styles.

"He is historically significant, because he flies in the face of assumptions."

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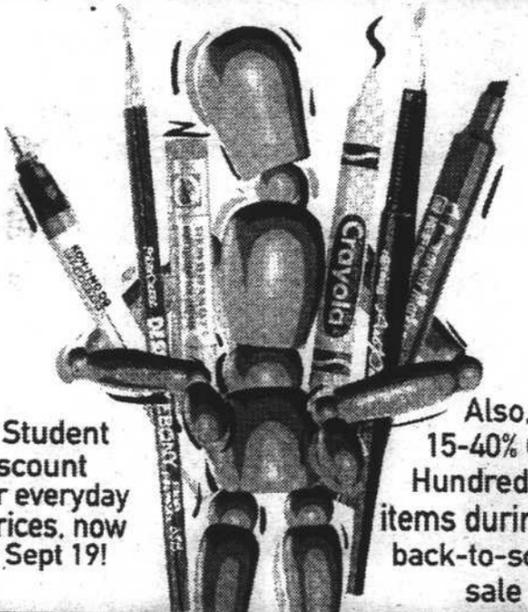


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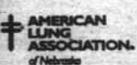
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