

Sheldon Art Gallery hires new director

Driesbach brings new vision, experience to the position

STORY BY MELANIE MENSCH PHOTO BY STEVEN BENDER

California and Nebraska may seem worlds apart, but to Janice Driesbach, the differences are few and far between.

Driesbach, who previously served as curator for the Crocker Art Museum in Sacramento, Calif., will begin her directorship at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery on Sept. 1.

"The first couple of months will be an information session," she said. "However, what I noticed is that Lincoln is not very different from Sacramento.

"Both are state capitals, and both cities are in agriculturally strong communities. Also, both Crocker and the Sheldon have rich heritages."

Driesbach, who had worked for Crocker since 1985, will replace George Neubert, who left in the summer of 1999 to become curator of the San Antonio Museum of Art in Texas.

Daniel Siedell, curator of the Sheldon, has been serving as interim director since Neubert's departure.

"Janice brings a very good reputation to the museum profession, as a curator and as an administrator," he said. "She brings new vision to our institution."

A search committee of university personnel, regional art collectors and other community members appointed Driesbach on June 28.

Herb Howe, associate to the chancellor, will work on the Sheldon's happenings with Driesbach on a daily basis.

"Her wealth of experience will take the Sheldon where it needs to go," Howe said.

Siedell, who was a committee member, said Driesbach's desire for collaboration made her a key candidate for the position.

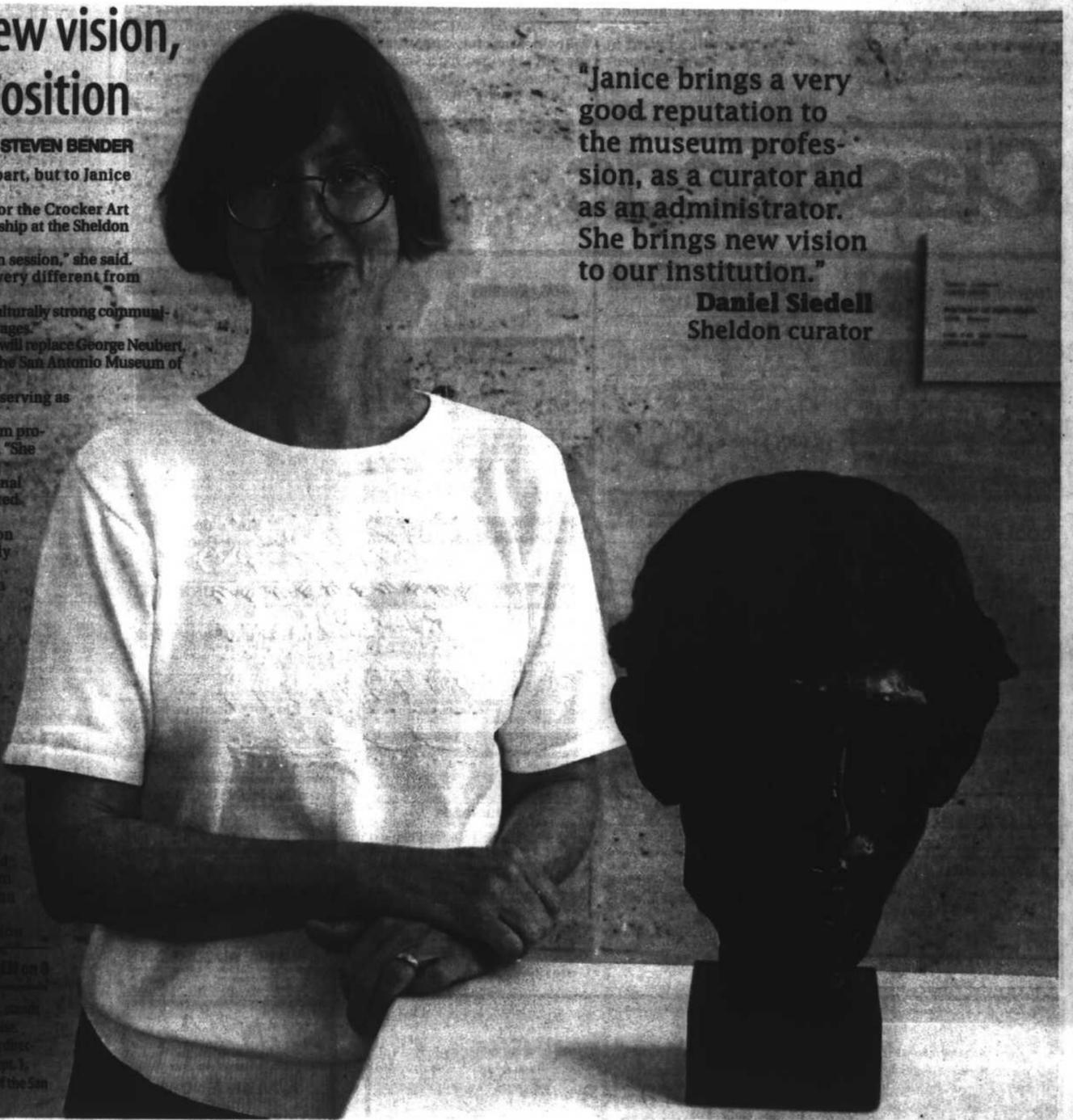
"We looked for someone who was proactive, who would utilize their skills and people," Siedell said. "Her presence brings collaboration."

Since 1985, Driesbach worked for Crocker's collections and education department, where she earned a degree in art history and a master's degree in art education from Allegheny College in Meadville, Pa. Both her master's and Ph.D. degrees are from the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

Driesbach began her career as a gallery director at Case Western Reserve University from 1973 to 1975, and worked at the University Art Museum for 10 years.

Driesbach also worked at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery from 1985 to 1989.

Janice Driesbach, the new director of Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, stands next to "Portrait of John Henry," a 1920 work by George Noyes. Driesbach said her job includes overseeing the collection of the museum's collection. She officially replaces George Neubert, who left in the summer of 1999 to become curator of the San Antonio Museum of Art in Texas.



"Janice brings a very good reputation to the museum profession, as a curator and as an administrator. She brings new vision to our institution."

Daniel Siedell
Sheldon curator

Exhibits show two sides of art

Social issues and metaphorical issues examined

BY KEN MORTON

This fall at the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, one can wander through one hall and enjoy re-creations of common everyday objects addressing metaphorical issues.

But one is advised not to get too relaxed enjoying these pleasant works of art, because in the next hall, visitors will be slapped with an array of sexual images addressing many different social issues.

Two exhibitions coming to the Sheldon next month will bring two very different styles of art into the spotlight.

Conrad Bakker's exhibit, "Art and Objecthood," is made up of pieces - constructed by Bakker - of everyday objects that Bakker has altered in some way.

The other exhibit, "The JAM Portfolio," by S. Clay Wilson and John Gierlich, displays a series of frames from the "underground comics" which emerged on the West Coast in the late-'60s.

Bakker's exhibit includes objects such as nose hair clippers, a lawn mower, a race car track and a life jacket.

Instead of simply re-creating these everyday articles, Bakker intentionally alters the pieces.

Daniel Siedell, Sheldon's interim director and a personal friend of Bakker, said the pieces are created in order to explore conceptual ideas.

"The idea of creating - and altering - everyday items is so that people can't just look at one of the pieces and think, 'Oh, what a nice life jacket or lawn mower,'" Siedell said.

"The distortions let viewers move away from thinking of these pieces as re-creations to thinking about the metaphorical issues the art addresses."

For example, Siedell said Bakker's life jacket piece becomes a metaphor for leisure activities like boating and sailing. But at the same time, it is a life preserver.

"The life jacket becomes a symbol of danger," Siedell said. "People are constantly pursuing an illusion that they can't ever truly attain, and the life preserver becomes a symbol of struggling to stay alive in pursuit of that dream."

Bakker also explores the theme of the pursuit of the "American Dream" through the "cul-de-sac," a suburban neighborhood that is artificially created.

"The cul-de-sac becomes a sense of community - the 'pot of gold' - for many Americans," Siedell said. "At the same time, it isolates the people who live on them from the rest of the community."

While Bakker's exhibit is meant to be displayed and viewed in an art gallery, Siedell said Wilson and Gierlich's "JAM Portfolio" may look a bit strange on the walls of the Sheldon.

The exhibit has been a part of the Sheldon's permanent collection for more than 25 years, but has never been displayed for the public.

Both artists have Nebraska ties. Wilson was born in Lincoln and graduated from the University of Nebraska. Gierlich spent two years in NU's graduate program, but left and moved to Washington state.

The "JAM Portfolio" grew out of an art movement that sought to bring political and social issues into art.

Because so many established artists felt these issues shouldn't be a part of the art world, Wilson and Gierlich moved their work into the underground.

"The 'JAM Portfolio,'" Siedell said, "conveys messages through images where every space is filled, whether it be with a picture or text."

Siedell said the use of sexual images in the "JAM Portfolio" may cause some controversy, but he isn't too worried about it.

The sexual imagery, he said, may seem a bit childish now, but, at the time, the images were addressing social issues "with an irreverence for the status quo."

Karen Jacovy, the curator of education, agreed with Siedell and said the exhibit shouldn't cause too many problems.

She said the Sheldon would run a disclaimer warning people of the mature subject matter, but she felt it was important to show the exhibit without censoring it.

"The point of an art gallery," Jacovy said, "is to make people look, stop and think, as well as provide a historical perspective."

If a university art gallery can't provide a forum for ideas - all ideas - then we're really missing the boat," she said.

Bakker's "Art and Objecthood" runs from Sept. 20 to Nov. 5, and the "JAM Portfolio" will be displayed from Sept. 19 to Nov. 12. For more information, contact the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden at 472-2461.

SHELDON FALL PREVIEW

The Jam Portfolio by S.C. Wilson and John Gierlich
September 19- November 12

Conrad Bakker: Art and Objecthood
September 20- November 5

Between Image and Object: The Prints of Robert Mangold
October 6- January 7

Sheldon Statewide at the Sheldon: Food for Thought
November 7- January 14

Miniature Furniture From the College of Architecture
November 21- January 21

African-American Quilts from the Robert and Helen Cargo
January 12- April 1, 2001



Wesley Snipes stars in the action flick 'The Art of War.' His character, a member of a secret United Nations commando force, gets framed for a murder he did not commit.

Snipes movie fails to qualify as art

BY SAMUEL MCKEYON

"The Art of War" is a movie constructed by morons, so it can only be viewed and enjoyed under two circumstances.

One requires you to be equally moronic in the face of common sense. The other requires a severe sympathy for the star, Wesley Snipes, who acts in this film as if his serious acting career is ending, and he knows it.

Snipes must have sorely needed to pay the bills. There is a story in this movie, if one chooses to call it such, and it involves a secret United Nations commando force that Snipes' character, Shaw, belongs to, and the various double-crosses that conspire to frame Shaw for a murder he did not commit.

There are many characters here whose mere existence muddies the plot. There's a killer who could not possibly have killed the person he was supposed to, and yet we are offered no better alternative. There's operative masterminds, who receive their comeuppance for reasons I cannot understand other than they're bad, and

they're supposed to die.

In ways, "The Art of War" mirrors the first "Mission: Impossible" film, another movie that explained its plot twists with: "Well, they're spies, so you're supposed to be at least as confused as they are."

But "The Art of War" jacks that notion up a notch, tacking on a genuine "Who cares?" aspect to the entire proceeding.

Writer Wayne Beach and director Christian Duguay attempt to validate these answers by having a truckload of dark gruesome deaths, exploding bombs every 20 minutes or so and ominous (and more or less unrelated) references to the title, which comes from an ancient Chinese book on winning battles. "Wall Street" used the concept better as a throwaway line.

For good measure, a Chinese female sidekick (Marie Matiko) is tossed in to get undressed and teach our stoic Shaw a little humanity. She wants to go to France. A shiny quarter to anybody that can guess if she does or not.

There came a point in "The Art

MOVIE REVIEW

The Art of War

Director: Christian Duguay

Stars: Wesley Snipes, Anne Archer, Marie Matiko

Rating: R (death and language)

★ of 4 stars

of War" when the prospect of a dental visit held greater promise.

I put the notebook away and halted any attempts to describe, discern or determine the numerous plot lines. It became increasingly clear that some people were being wrongfully chased, some were wrongful chasers, and some FBI agents (headed by Maury Chaykin) would rather talk about professional wrestlers.

I did watch with great enjoyment as Shaw and his rival battled to the death under U.N. "neighborhood."

Please see WAR on 8