

At first glance, a haphazard arrangement of what seems to be garage-sale leftovers fill a room inside the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery.

But as visitors step deeper into the gallery, a closer look reveals that these random, everyday, around-the-house objects are in fact pieces in the Sheldon's latest art exhibit this fall.

Painted, wooden replicas of suburbanite stuff, like a lawn chair, a nose hair trimmer and an exercise bike, draw both positive and negative views of American success.

The exhibit, "Conrad Bakker: Art and Objecthood," runs until Nov. 5 outside the Mary Riepma Ross Theater.

An art professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., Conrad Bakker said his artwork explores the relationship between consumers and material objects.

"People map themselves by the things they own," he said.

Although his life-size sculptures of life jackets, lawn sprinklers and sandals seem realistic, Bakker said he slightly exaggerated and altered the pieces for effect.

"It's not expressiveness I'm after. It's how objects play with the body's knowledge of things," he said.

"I'm not about realism. Out of the corner of your eye, it looks real, but the closer you get, you get a fractured version of an object. I like to see what happens to the viewer, to their ideas about the object," Bakker said.

Gallery Preview

Conrad Bakker Exhibit

Where: Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery 12th & R

When: Until Nov. 5

Cost: Free

After receiving his bachelor's of fine arts in 1992 from Calvin College, Bakker then studied painting and sculpture, receiving his master's of fine arts in 1996 at the School of Art at Washington University in St. Louis.

With his master's of fine arts in 1996, Bakker returned to Calvin College to teach. That's when he began to artistically copy objects.

Bakker said he first painted replicas of vacation photos and eventually turned to wood as his medium.

"I've been interested in objects forever," he said. "I'm blurring where the art began. The objects are clunky and awkward and falling apart."

Bakker intentionally distorts these mass-produced items to shift the viewer's attention from the artist's technical ability to the object's symbolic value.

Dan Siedell, the Sheldon's curator, said Bakker's pieces related to people through memories and experiences.

"This is the stuff that clutters our lives," Siedell said. "It gives our lives meaning. (The exhibit) forces us to look at a non-art object and give it meaning."

John Wenderoth, a UNL graduate art student, met Bakker last week when the exhibit was set up.

"His art is fun to look at," Wenderoth said. "It registers as a real thing, but as you approach it, you see it's not functional. It's interesting in both idea and form."

Bakker uses the "cul-de-sac," a shape similar to a light bulb, to serve as a metaphor for isolation and connection in many of his pieces. This shape, used in designing American suburban neighborhoods, appears in the negative space in the "Life Jacket," "Lawn Sprinkler" and "Race Track."

"It's a suburban goal to live in a cul-de-sac," Siedell said. "It's a ready-made community. But it's also a yuppie culture."

Siedell also said the pieces represented both the blessing and curse of American success.

Pieces like "Life Jacket" and "Lawn Sprinkler" spur ideas of leisure activities like sailing or caring for the yard, but these objects also prompt fears of drowning or the pressure between competitive neighbors, Siedell said.

"Bakker is not trying to force us to think different about the object," Siedell said. "He just wants us to think about the object, to connect with our recollections and nostalgia."

Story by Melanie Menck

altered reality

artist uses interpretations of common items as symbols of American success

Shankar brings Indian music tradition to Lied

Because of lack of name recognition, the daughter of the famous Indian sitarist, called world-class, hasn't drawn crowds to the box office.

BY KEN MORTON

Few musical traditions can be traced to 1,000-year-old musical roots.

One exception is in the music of India, which has been passed from performers to apprentices for hundreds of years.

The next great musician in traditional Indian music, sitarist Anoushka Shankar, will play at the Lied Center for Performing Arts tonight.

Anoushka Shankar holds the distinction of being the only sitar player to be entirely trained by her father, Ravi Shankar. Ravi Shankar helped bring Indian music to the United States in the late 1960s with performances at the Monterey Pop Festival and Woodstock.

Ravi Shankar's relationship with the Beatles, specifically George Harrison, exposed even more Americans to the music.

Despite an increased awareness by Western countries, Indian music has not changed much, said University of Nebraska-Lincoln Professor Randall Snyder.

Snyder, a music theory composition professor, said the music of India is similar to jazz.

"Indian music includes a great deal of improvisation, even more so than jazz music," Snyder said.

The improvisation, Snyder said, comes between the sitar and the drums, called tablas.

"Tablas are different from any other drum in the world," Snyder said. "The drums are tuned to actual notes to play along with the sitar."

Since most of the music is based on improvisation,

Snyder said the songs are based on "ragas." Different ragas are played for different times of the year, different days of the week and even different emotions. Indian musicians spend years learning and perfecting these ragas.

Anoushka Shankar's performance at the Lied will demonstrate years of training with Ravi Shankar. Anoushka Shankar started training with her father at the age of 9 and made her debut at 13.

Snyder said making a debut at that early of an age was impressive.

"Some musicians can spend 15 to 20 years apprenticing," he said.

Anoushka Shankar released her self-titled debut CD in 1998 on Angel Records. Angel is home to such renowned artists as Sarah Brightman.

"Anourag," Anoushka Shankar's second CD, was released this year to more critical acclaim. Like the first CD, the songs on "Anourag" were written by her father.

Charles Bethea, executive director of the Lied, said the performance was originally scheduled to include both Ravi and Anoushka Shankar, but Ravi Shankar's heart problems have kept him from performing.

Bethea said the lack of a recognizable name has

Performance Preview

Anoushka Shankar Performance

Where: Lied Center 301 N.12th

When: Tonight @ 7:30

Cost: \$20-\$28, Half price for students



Carl O'Grady/DN

hurt ticket sales.

"Many people want to come and see a big-name act," he said, "but having a performer of Anoushka's caliber is a big deal for us."

Before the 7:30 p.m. performance, a talk will be held with Phani Tej Adidam, a tanpura player from Omaha. Adidam will also perform before Anoushka goes on stage.

Bethea credits the Indian student organization RAAG, a group committed to promoting Indian classical music, arts and culture in Lincoln, with helping set up Anoushka's performance and the

talk with Adidam. No RAAG members were available for comment.

"An opportunity to work with a group like RAAG is always great," Bethea said. "It gives us a chance to communicate with a segment of the population we wouldn't normally have contact with."

Snyder hopes student organizations such as RAAG and the Lied Center can continue to bring internationally renowned artists such as Anoushka Shankar to Nebraska.

"It is an honor to have world-class performances coming to our state," he said.