

## Sheldon Sculpture Garden becomes a target of random destruction story by sarah baker

# WANDALISM

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery's Sculpture Garden has always been a place of study for students, of perusal for art aficionados and of curiosity to visitors in every season. But, in the past few years, it's also become a target for pricey vandalism.

The most recent vandalism, earlier this month, was to a retaining wall around the "Willy" sculpture near Westbrook Music Building. Several stones were ripped off the wall, totaling about \$5,000 worth of damage - which adds to the string of equally expensive vandalism.

Enough so that the museum plans to implement, over the next few years, a security system for the outdoor art in the Sculpture Garden.

"We have a problem with vandalism in the sculpture garden," Sheldon Curator Dan Siedell said. "We have to figure out ways to secure the sculptures without inhibiting interaction. That's a fine line."

Just what the new system will be is still up in the air, Sheldon Director Janice Driesbach said.

"We're looking at the outdoor sculpture security issue from many points," Driesbach said. "Other communities and cities that have strong public art programs have these same challenges."

Security ideas under consideration include installation of lights, landscaping revisions and surveillance cameras.

Driesbach also wants to strengthen art education for the campus through more in-depth labeling on the outdoor works and frequent Sculpture Garden tours and events.

She plans to work with UNL Landscape Services to install lights and consider landscaping options to deter would-be vandals.

Robert Hensarling, director of Landscape Services, said some minor things could heighten security, such as trimming shrubs and trees and installing motion-sensitive lights.

"It's dark - very dark - out there and to have light would create a safer atmosphere," he said.

Siedell said surveillance cameras, one viable option, could provide its own share of problems.

"We'd have to have the staff to man those cameras," he said. "And there's always the question of who's paying for it."

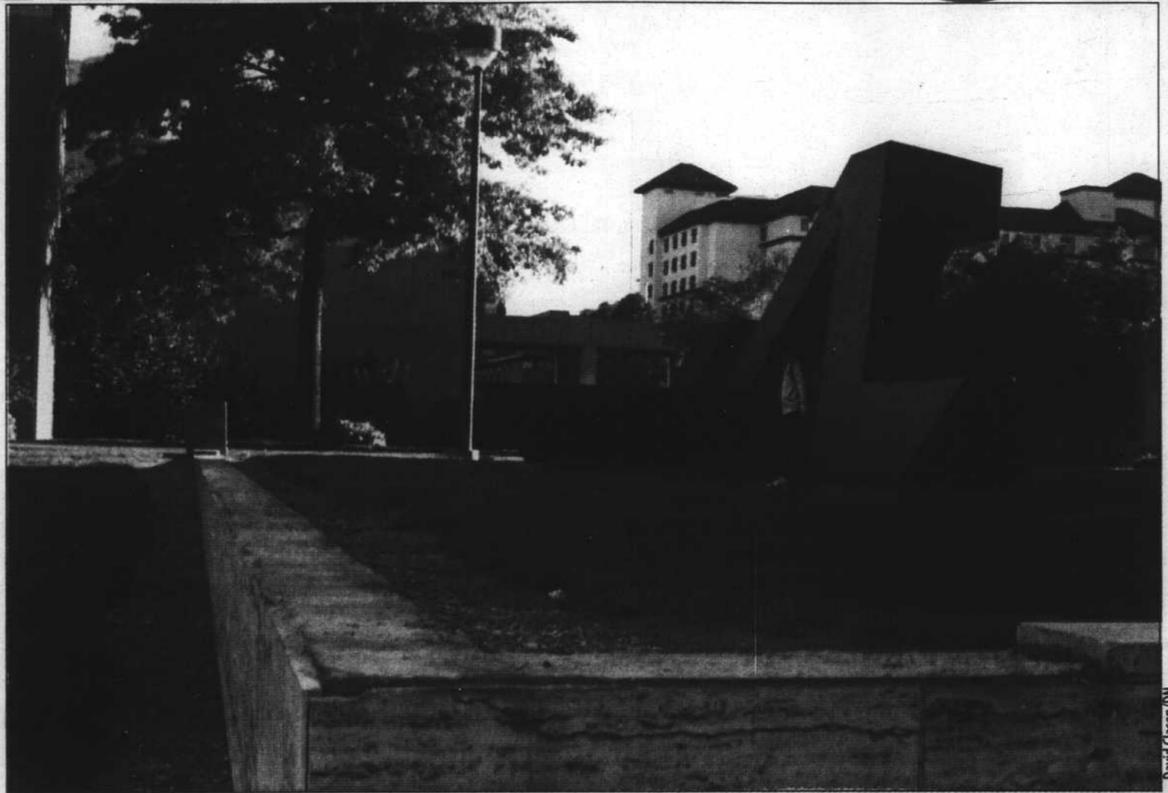
Creating the outdoor security system requires the updating of the indoor security system at the Sheldon.

The two security systems would be one part of the Sheldon's work to regain its full accreditation from the American Association of Museums, which put the Sheldon on probation earlier this month.

"The new (outdoor) system will definitely coordinate with the existing (indoor) system," he said. "It could mean total replacement of the system already inside the gallery. Cameras are a whole system, and we could be looking at six figures at least."

But while six figures seems a lot to spend, the vandalism itself poses a hefty price tag of its own.

In October 1999, vandals smeared pizza sauce across the face of "Fallen Dreamer," a large bronze head sculpture. The damage totaled between \$4,000 and \$10,000, and has yet to be repaired. The



Marina Ali, 7, plays under "Willy," a sculpture designed by Tony Smith, in front of Westbrook Music Building Wednesday. Recently the marble wall was partially destroyed by vandals, said Jan Driesbach, director of Sheldon Art Gallery.

David Casen/DN

VANDALISM			
<b>January 2, 1998</b> The sculpture, "Man in the Open Air," was ripped off its base and later recovered on East Campus after Nebraska's victory in the Orange Bowl. The sculpture was returned to the Sheldon in early 2000 and is now on display inside the gallery. The repairs took two years to complete and cost about \$15,000. The sculpture will not be displayed outdoors again.	<b>October 10, 1999</b> Vandals smeared pizza sauce on the "Fallen Dreamer," a sculpture of a large bronze head located between the Sheldon and Architecture Hall. Acid in the pizza sauce ate through the sculpture's outside patina, a finished layer that protects the bronze sculpture from weathering. The sauce ate through an estimated 20 square inches on the sculpture's ear, eyes, lips and nose. The sculpture also had deep scratches in the face's lower lip, which were not reported before, but could not be blamed on the vandalism. Repairing the sculpture, which was acquired by the art gallery last year for an undisclosed amount, would cost between \$4,000 and \$10,000.	<b>November 29, 1999</b> A set of 10 black balustrades designed by Louis H. Sullivan, that were originally part of the Carson Pierie Scott building built in Chicago in 1899, are vandalized. The top half of one of the balustrades was broken off by vandals on Sunday, November 29. The bottom half of the same balustrade was bent in. The cost of the vandalism was estimated at several hundred dollars, and the piece was repaired over the next few months.	<b>September 17, 2000</b> In three separate incidents, 12 marble panels were pried off the top of a wall surrounding the popular Tony Smith sculpture, "Willy," located in front of the Westbrook Music Hall. The panels were smashed on the sidewalk. The sculpture, a popular place for students to hang out between classes, is surrounded by the 3-foot wall made of travertine marble, the same Italian stone the Sheldon building is made of. The damage was estimated at about \$5,000 and has not yet been fixed.

Melanie Falk/DN

damage occurred on a Husker gameday.

In January 1998, another sculpture, "Man in the Open Air," was ripped off its base and later found on East Campus. The vandalism, which happened during a night of mayhem on campus after Nebraska's Orange Bowl win, totaled \$15,000.

Another consideration, Siedell said, was moving sculptures out of the garden.

The sculptures would be placed on other areas of campus and replaced with works that are less flat in nature, therefore deterring skateboarders, bikers

and in-line skaters from "grinding" across the surfaces while doing tricks.

Siedell said sculptures in other areas of the campus don't get vandalized as often or in the same ways as the ones in the Sculpture Garden.

Siedell said the tall, circular bronze sculpture near Andrews Hall, a piece done by artist Richard Serra, gets marred with graffiti often. But, he said, the scribbles can be cleaned off.

While protecting the works is important, Siedell said he didn't want the security measures to stop

people from visiting the Garden. "We don't want to erect a fence and have an armed guard out there declaring the value of the objects," he said. "We don't want this to mean that people can't sit on or touch the sculptures. That's what we have them for."

Instead, he said he hoped the new security system would deter those who had destructive ideas.

"We have to be realistic - we know there is always, no matter what, going to be the temptation to do damaging things."

# Actress creates play out of memories of segregation

BY BRIAN CHRISTOPHERSON

Forty years ago, six years after the widely recognizable Brown v. Board of Education case, the Shanks family moved into the lion's den.

Except in their case, it seems the lion didn't know who it was up against.

The black family of five moved from Denver to Kansas City, Kan., situated just below the Mason-Dixon line, which left them open to racial criticism.

Nena St. Louis was in sixth grade at the time, and she can recall those racist-filled years of growing up as a member of the Shanks family, a family that became thunderous voices in the Civil Rights movement.

And now she wants to share her memories and take an audience back into America's not-so-lovely past in a play she recently created titled "Schools!"

St. Louis will perform her one-woman show at the Lincoln Community Playhouse on Saturday at 8 p.m. and on Sunday at 3 p.m.

The play is a cooperative production between the Lincoln Community Playhouse and the Artists Diversity Residency Program at UNL.

St. Louis is an artist in the Residency Program, a former University of Nebraska-Lincoln student and is excited about performing her play in the state she once called

home.

"My mother and I are the main characters in the play," St. Louis said. "It's told from a child's point of view, and it's actually funny through much of it."

A play about racism can be funny? "Even though times were difficult, things were still funny," she said. "I was growing up and humans are inherently funny, so it has to have humor."

Excuse St. Louis if she is a little nervous, though.

The San Francisco resident spent some of her childhood living in Nebraska, and her mother, Lela Shanks, still resides in Lincoln and plans to see her daughter's play about their lives.

"It will be the first time my mother has ever seen the play," St. Louis said.

Although, it will be Lela Shanks' first time seeing the play, she'll recognize it from introduction to conclusion.

It was Lela Shanks and her late husband, Hughes, who fought the Kansas school board to desegregate schools below the Mason-Dixon line.

"Initially, the state went to a segregated school there and thought that was going to be OK," St. Louis said. "My parents did not think that was OK at all."

So the Shanks and some other upset parents sued the state, with their case eventually being included

as part of the Downs v. Board of Education case.

Eventually desegregated schools slowly worked their way into the Shanks' town, but St. Louis said the state tried to limit the amount of blacks that could attend and vividly remembered protesting it in the 1962-63 school year.

The Shanks also protested in their own way.

So Lela Shanks had her children, Cedric, Shela and Nena go to school in the morning, but she taught them in the afternoon.

"The city brought truancy charges against my parents, and even black ministers were scared to let my parents speak in church because they were afraid of what we were doing," St. Louis said.

The Shanks did not stop preaching the message of equality when they moved to Nebraska.

"I remember that my parents made it a point to take us out-state," St. Louis said. "I remember sleeping in farm-houses, and we talked to the people about issues."

Now, St. Louis uses her play to tell her stories.

Although, sometimes, people don't like to remember the dismal past.

"I am performing this play in schools, and one of the little fifth grade girls told her teacher, 'I don't want to talk about it. It's too sad,'" St.

### Performance Preview

## Schools!

Where: Lincoln Community Playhouse  
2500 S. 56th

When: Sat. @ 8 p.m.  
Sun. @ 3 p.m.

Louis said.

Sad or not, she said the message could get through to all people.

"It's not just about blacks and whites. It's about everybody," St. Louis said. "A white man can walk into an office and have an Asian man heading a job. He might have no experience in relating to people of a different background."

But as she travels around telling her story, she sees a society becoming slowly united.

St. Louis relayed a story about her plane flight to Lincoln and a conversation she had with an Asian man about possible profiling of Asians in America.

"When an Asian person asks if I can relate to his experiences, that says something to me," St. Louis said. "It might only be a start, but that's way better than things used to be."



Steven Bender/DN

Nena St. Louis rehearses for her one-woman play "Schools!" on Wednesday at the Lincoln Community Playhouse. Her play tells an autobiographical story of growing up in Kansas City, Kan., during desegregation. She will perform at the playhouse Saturday and Sunday.