First sculpture of series ready for fall installation

By Judy LaRotonda
8-8-'78

"...Into the statue that breathes, the soul of the sculptor is bidden."
- Richard Realf

Eugene B. Friley, professor of art at Ohio State, poured his soul into the mold of a sculpture that will be the first of a series of sculptures installed throughout the campus within the next few years.

Friley described the sculpture as a figurative piece which represents a female in a dance-like pose. As of yet, she has no name.

The hollow black figure stands 20 feet tall and weighs about one ton. It is composed of a metal armature coated with innovative cement materials containing fiberglass and plastic.

Once placed on its pedestal, the entire figure will stand approximately 30 feet tall. It will be located near Dreese Electronics Laboratory, 205 Neil Ave.

Adverse weather conditions, particularly during the winter, sometimes made work on the sculpture impossible, Friley said. The final product was about seven months in the making.

After the first coat of cement was put on the armature, the sculpture was moved to the stadium Spring Quarter of 1976. In the stadium a major portion of the work was done to bring it to completion in the summer of 1976.

The sculpture is now suspended between two supportive steel beams in the stadium where it is being stored until the base and pedestal are completed near Dreese Lab.

Friley said he would like to do more work for the series once it gets off the ground. "There are lots of things I'd like to do. It depends totally on the administration," he said.

The idea of the sculpture series is an attempt to bring art into the public eye, said Andrew J. Broekema, dean of the College of the Arts.

Broekema said the college hopes to expose art to people who normally wouldn't make the effort to go to a gallery.

Long range plans for the series include possible applications for grants in order to commission sculptors to come in and create more works, Broekema said. The sculpture by Friley was funded by the College of the Arts.

Tenatively, installation of the first sculpture will be in the beginning of September.
At ‘unwise’ location

Sculpture displayed on campus

By Amy L. Fahnstock

A piece of sculpture created by a faculty member in the OSU art department is now on display in the pedestrian mallway between Baker Systems Engineering building, and Irwin E. Dreese Laboratory on Neil Avenue.

But the artist designed it for placement in front of Sullivant Hall on 15th Avenue.

The untitled piece is the work of Eugene B. Friley, professor of art, who has been at Ohio State for 32 years. Friley describes it as an abstract form of a woman in a dance position.

“The vertical form was originally intended to compliment the four pillars of Sullivant,” Friley explained. “And it was made black to contrast with the white limestone of the building.”

“I think it is a rather strong piece,” stated Friley. “I’m not too pleased with the location — too many obstructions nearby. Luckily, the present location has vertical architecture and a black and white motif.

“The base should be higher,” he noted. “But the present position in a wind tunnel and the effect of the buildings made it unwise, though.”

Friley noted that he was not a member of the committee which made the decision on the placement of the sculpture. “I don’t know the rationale behind the decision,” he said.

A spokesman for the committee said they made a list of all possible sites. The committee then toured all the proposed sites. The present site was chosen as most appropriate in relation to the buildings, traffic flow through the mallway and other variables.

Friley said that his intention was to bring visual art to the campus. “The campus had a grim atmosphere,” he said.

The display culminates several years work which began in 1974, when the initial model for the sculpture was constructed.

On the model's completion in August 1976, the sculpture was stored in Ohio Stadium where most of the work was done. On Sept. 15 it was moved to the mallway. Friley constructed the piece using a metal and wire mesh core and a fiberglass cement mixture for the exterior. A dark stain was added to make it black.

“I'm still working on it,” said Friley. “It needs patching at the base.”

The sculpture fell once when it was near completion. “A cable shifted and the chain used to lower it broke,” said Friley. “There was extensive damage, I had to modify it somewhat because it was too far along.” Friley was lucky to escape injury — the one-ton piece fell only two and a half feet away from where he was standing.

Friley feels the sculpture is a success. “I do hope it arouses a bit of controversy. I'll be disappointed if it goes unnoticed,” he added. “Even negative comments are good — a person has to develop a rationale for his comments. That means he's started thinking about it.”

A piece of sculpture by Eugene B. Friley, professor of art, is lowered into place in the pedestrian mallway between Baker Systems Engineering building and Erwin E. Dreese Laboratory.
Abstract sculpture triggers reactions

By Janice A. Born
Lantern staff writer 2 - 14 - 84

Wedged between Dreese Lab and Baker Systems Engineering Building rises the ebony-colored figure. Its arms and legs end in points; eyes and lips are only symbolic.

Many students have trouble deciding what the sculpture represents. Most agree, though, that it has feminine qualities.

"We call it 'The Crab Lady' because it looks like it has big pinchers," said Shari Jester, a junior from Delphos.

Robert Dowen, a senior from Columbus, said, "It looks like a woman with a fish head."

Itzel Ulloa, a graduate student from Panama, said she likes the sculpture although she's not quite sure what it is. "It looks like some kind of human mixed with an animal," she said.

The sculpture, entitled "Soliloquy", does represent a female figure, said Eugene Friley, professor of art and creator of the sculpture.

"It's done in an abstract way to trigger the imagination of the individual," Friley said.

According to Webster's dictionary, soliloquy means "1. the act of talking to oneself, and 2. a dramatic monologue that gives the illusion of being a series of unspoken reflections."

Friley said he created the sculpture with the hope that it would "get the ball rolling" for more art to appear on campus.

"Nothing (placing art on campus) had been done in 50 years," he said, referring to the statue of former OSU President William Oxley Thompson which stands in front of the main library.

Most large, prestigious universities have a great deal more art than does Ohio State, Friley said.

"The university does its students and faculty a disservice by not having a more challenging visual environment," he said.

Some faculty members, however, didn't like this kind of challenge.

When the sculpture was erected by Dreese Lab in 1978, several professors in that building circulated a petition requesting its removal. But a committee chose not to act on the petition, Friley said.

Robert E. Fenton, professor of electric engineering, said he feels the sculpture is inappropriate for that area.

"The sculpture out there now has no relationship with technology," Fenton said.

An art piece dealing with science and technology would be more appropriate because two engineering buildings border the site, he said.

The figure, which is about 27 feet tall, originally was to be placed in front of Sullivan Hall on 15th Avenue, but the university decided that was not an appropriate location, Friley said.

Equipment rental and materials were paid for by the College of Art, he said. Friley's time and talents were donated.

In building the sculpture, Friley first welded together a screen figure, and then covered the screen with a dyed concrete mixture containing fiberglass and a synthetic rubber compound for added strength.

It took Friley about two years to create the figure. During that time it hung from the rafters at the bottom of Ohio Stadium.

Friley said he feels his sculpture broke the ice for more art to be brought to Ohio State. Faculty and students, however, are still very conservative in terms of art appreciation, he said.
Moving art

By Jo McCulty

MOST STATUES are stationary. But this one, "Soliloquy," was moved from its home of 18 years to allow renovation of Dreese Laboratories. The reinforced concrete artwork by Eugene Fliley, professor emeritus of art, has a new home on Herrick Drive, just east of the Olentangy River.