Rowan depicts emotional heritage

By Annie Hall
Entertainment Editor

Agonized, tortured and suffering are words which spring to mind when viewing Patrick Rowan's exhibit Procession, currently showcased at the Lied Art Gallery. This powerful expressionistic display is made of 16 abstract paintings and 24 figurative sculptures.

Rowan, a University of Nebraska at Lincoln art professor, began the paintings in 1992.

Procession's message is best communicated by Rowan. When describing his hand-carved wood sculptures, he said, "These male images represent the patriarchal, living death memories of my Irish Catholic heritage: visions of death and leaving, anger, fear and guilt, isolation and alienation; all of which address universal societal and theological issues."

If you're thinking this sounds a bit heavy, you're right. This exhibit is meant to draw forth the viewer's emotions and is filled with religious imagery.

As the columns of wood crafted in extremist, emaciated, agonized figures of intense human suffering stare down at you with their hollow eyes, one cannot help but feel the pain the artist was attempting to express.

"This is an authentic part of the human community because the work, like life, doesn't offer forth an explanation for the suffering," said the Rev. Ted Bohr, S.J., Lied Art Gallery director.

Bohr also said the sculptures "speak the Gospel messages of helping the lame, the weak, the suffering. They show us what it means to be a Christian."

While the sculptures depict the darker aspects of humanity, the paintings offer the hope of salvation. Passages I and Passages II, completed in 1996, stand out in the series. The muted colors of the two surrounded by black is an example of how salvation is found within the church.

Sunday Morning is another exceptional work in Rowan's exhibit.

"This painting shows a mastery of careful planning," Bohr said. This work draws the audience into the nuances of bold colors, stark contrasts and precise execution.

I highly encourage everyone to wander over to the Lied Center and view Procession for themselves. It is a personal exhibit guaranteed to draw forth intense emotion even from those art novices.

Procession runs through Feb. 18. Regular gallery hours are noon — 4 p.m. daily. Admission is free.

Photo by Jay Langhurst

Hand-carved wooden sculptures by University of Nebraska professor and artist Patrick Rowan are being displayed in the Lied Center Gallery through Feb. 18. Pictured is the title work "Procession," which is not yet finished. The listed price for the unfinished piece is $40,000 and is set for completion later this year.