Stolen Lied statue returns unscathed

By Jean Ortiz
News Editor

Somebody took the name of a statue titled "Exile," part of the Lied Center art gallery's latest exhibit, quite literally.

The Lied Center staff reported to Public Safety that the 7-foot wooden statue created by University of Nebraska-Lincoln professor and artist, Patrick Rowan, was missing from the lobby of the center on Jan. 16 around noon. It was part of the exhibit titled "Procession." The statue was quickly recovered on Jan. 18, after an anonymous call came in to Public Safety around 11:15 p.m. The caller reported that the statue could be found near the entrance to the Lied Center.

Director of Public Safety Rick McAuliffe reported that the 40 to 50 pound statue was found undamaged where the caller had said.

The Lied Center staff members speculate that the statue was taken sometime overnight. McAuliffe said officials have no leads as to who would steal the artwork, valued at $6,000.

Shortly after the statue's disappearance, the Rev. Ted Bohr, S.J., gallery director, got word around that if it was returned no questions would be asked and he would not press charges for what would amount to a class III felony. If convicted, the thief would face 1 to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to $25,000.

"I was horrified," Bohr said. "I couldn't imagine what was going through the mind of [the person] who took it."

Rowan saw the incident in a much different light.

"I thought it was kind of funny," Rowan said in a telephone conversation from Lincoln. He also said that he doesn't get attached to his work as many artists tend to do.

Bohr said the theft, the only one in the history of the art gallery, was a shame. With no lobby security system in place, no artwork can be left unattended in the lobby now unless it is firmly attached to the walls.

"It's unfortunate because it is a great space for art," Bohr said.

At Rowan's request "Exile" along with one other statue titled "Penitent II" had been placed outside the gallery to draw attention to the exhibit. Both statues are now inside the gallery.

"There's a little tighter security now," McAuliffe said.

Public Safety is still searching for the person or people responsible for the theft.

"A lot of people would have had access to the Lied Center before the building closed," McAuliffe said. "At this time, it is believed to be a prank."

If anyone has any information regarding this case, please contact Public Safety at 280-2104.