Combination work earns award

By Sheri Kishaba
Staff Writer

"It's half-painting, half-drawing," John Thein, assistant professor in the department of fine and performing arts, said of his work entitled, "Eye Sound III."

Thein received an "Award of Excellence" in the International Juried Art Competition for the mixed media work.

Exhibited last month at the Mussavi Gallery in New York City, it was one of 300 works chosen from more than 10,000 entries received from the United States, Canada, England, Mexico and Japan.

Four mediums
Thein used four mediums: watercolor, ink, pencil and pastel.

The work depicts a woman's outline with her arms and legs out to each side, and a faint outline of a man's head and arm looming over the horizon.

"The man's head is very quiet," Thein said, "(as is) the arm coming above the horizon. It's a very fine type of motion compared to a very primitive motion."

Initially, however, Thein said the piece started as a 4'x6' foot painting of a robe.

"I didn't like it, so instead of continuing on it," Thein said, "I just let it sit."

On a whim
About a week later, he was working with a model on other pieces. On a whim, he said, he decided to draw a quick outline of the woman standing with her arms hanging at her sides on top of the robe painting.

This was set aside again. Thein later viewed it but said he was not satisfied.

"I didn't like how the form just went down," he said. "I wanted a far more aggressive motion in the pose to hold the space."

He then drew the arms out of each side to form a "presence, an acknowledgement of the space." The legs were moved up and out to the side to be aggressive also, Thein said.

'Blunt, frontal type'
He then added the man's form in the background.

"So I had a blunt, frontal type of position, compared to a very quite one," he said. "It had two extremes."

The piece, he said, was the third in a series of "Eye Sound" works that he hopes to continue.

"Eye Sound III" was started last fall and took about eight months of intermittent work to complete.

Besides this exhibition, Thein also had his 19th one-man show, which ended this month, at Kansas State University.

Everyday experiences
His first show was at Hamlin University in St. Paul, Minn.

As an artist, Thein said, he is most influenced by everyday experiences, traveling and people around him.

Before coming to Creighton in 1975, Thein attended art schools and universities in Paris, Wisconsin and Iowa.

He also taught printmaking at the University of Iowa and was a professional printer of intaglio (etched) prints.

Thein has participated in more than 40 international, national and regional shows, and has illustrated six books.