

Parks Library

title ***Unlimited Possibilities***

artist **Doug Shelton**

Location:
Parks Library, second floor

Material:
oil on linen

Size:
18' 3" high by 22' 9" wide

Date:
1996

Made possible by:
ISU Office of External Affairs, University
Museums, the Fisher Representatives
System Artist-in-Residence Fund at the
ISU Foundation, Marjorie Morrison,
Cornelia and William Buck,
and the Estate of Alice Davis

Mural Project Coordinators:
Donna Friedman and
Brenda Jones

ISU Student Painters:
Robert Atwell, Dean Biechler, Nikki Grote, Gwen Kaye,
Quimin Liu, Justin Lorenzen, Kandi Rappe, Sandra
Spilker and Jim Wilcox



detail, *Unlimited Possibilities*

Unlimited Possibilities celebrates Iowa State's future as a premier land-grant university. Based on the Library Murals designed by Grant Wood, both in process and intent, this mural was commissioned by University Museums and ISU External Affairs. It was Iowa State's contribution to Iowa's Sequicentennial celebration, and it celebrates Iowa State's past and future vision as the best land-grant institution into the next century.

Artist's comments

The title for the mural is *Unlimited Possibilities*. This refers to the life of the student as well as the life of the University. In contrast and complementary to the Grant Wood designed murals in the Parks Library, which depict mature adults in society, I've focused on student learning activity.

The mural is divided into two sections - on the left is an agricultural setting, and on the right is a classroom setting. This can be viewed as town and country, city and rural, nature and civilization, etc.

University Museums/Art on Campus Program
Iowa State University **Ames, Iowa**

Center Section

The center section is of a circular design, reflecting both the blue curtains and the rotunda ceiling. The main element of this section is the commemorative cup which celebrates the University as a whole. The scene reflected in the cup is a pathway which symbolizes an individual student's path through life. This path is overlaid on the earth indicating the global concerns and influence of the University.

Curtains

The scenes in the mural are framed by large blue curtains. Blue is the color of the first place ribbon at fairs and suggests only the best. It is also suggestive of blueprints, the guide for building many things. It also suggests the magician's robe. This is to imply that regardless of how much knowledge we possess, much of the universe is still shrouded in mystery.

The curtains are covered with celestial images as well as images of more earthly nature: bits of schematics from electrical diagrams, images of individual Colleges at the University, e.g. Engineering, Family and Consumer Sciences, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture, Education, Business, Design, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the Library.

Left Side

Starting at the lower left hand corner, a female student is holding in her hands a piece of earth that resembles the State of Iowa. This suggests the future of Iowa is literally in the hands of the youth.

Moving up and to the right another female student has set aside her binoculars used for seeing distant objects, and with sketchbook in hand, is gazing off in the distance and imagining a future bit of molecular biology as seen through a doorway in time. The third student is viewing through a camera (working with light) a robin, the traditional harbinger of spring, the season of rebirth and growth.

On the horizon is a typical barn but this barn has a face, suggestive of the family farm and a hope for its secure place in the future.

Right Side

This is a classroom\laboratory scene with old and new forms of information gathering. In the lower left corner is an old-fashioned television, the kind using vacuum tube amplification. This is to remind the viewer of the original electronic digital computer first developed at Iowa State College, which used vacuum tube technology.

To the right is a male student using a computer in an imaginative way to literally learn about himself. To his left is a student is reading through a textbook. 'Never overlook anything' would describe her thinking. Behind him to the left on the table are an old-time carpenter's ruler in the shape of a square root symbol, a pen and a piece of paper. These suggest some tools never really lose their usefulness.

To the right is a male student using a file cabinet to retrieve information (old knowledge as suggested by the scrolled paper). The female student at the top is drawing on a large scale computer screen filled with an electrical wiring schematic. She is working on "the wheels of change": The wheel of the past is a wagon wheel; the wheel of the present is shaped somewhat like a movie reel (movies being a major contemporary art form), and the wheel of the future is not quite seen in its entirety to the right.

The apparition smoking up from the row of test tubes is meant to suggest the magical nature of much new technology. The city scene coming out of the mist implies that technology has the ability to be the crowning glory of civilization.

The *trompe l'oeil* section in the lower right hand corner provides space for artists' names and any other pertinent information.

Doug Shelton

Palimpsest

You are here.

~~Notation on Concourse Maps

Let Y be your destination, the unnamed
place beyond the flickering fluorescence
of corridors, the terrazzo floors worn smooth

from the shoes of the dead. Let X be
your present location, the uncharted
space between pencil and chalk marks,

the keypad's incessant clatter. Listen,
you are here, a blip on a screen, transfixed
between home and away. It is possible

to create a life, doors opening to other
doors, the fresh breeze of tomorrow
rushing in to make the world new

each day. The canvas remembers
its maker, inside the hairline grooves
under the brushstrokes live the barest

traces--whispered thoughts, words
spoken, mundane as groceries, bills
and gasoline. The fingerprints

of the dead are everywhere, the tiny
whorls like plots to cities where one
could spend a life. Best to find

your own path, chart the roadmap
etched under your skin, sit down,
get to know the wanting of your feet.

Debra Marquart, Assistant Professor in English
(Commissioned in 1997 after the Doug Shelton Mural, *Unlimited
Possibilities*)

About the Artist

Doug Shelton is a long time Des Moines artist and an accomplished painter who has documented his unique imagination on canvas for many years. Described loosely as surrealistic, his paintings are filled with whimsical and mysterious symbols, settings and characters. Each work can suggest many intriguing story lines or anecdotes to the viewer, but all stem from the artist's experience and stream of consciousness. Doug's environments are painted in a hyper-real fashion. Every detail and every element are pronounced and often heightened with spotlights or moonlight. The mystery that lurks within each painting and the feeling that something wonderful is going to unfold or the fact that magical things are happening at this very moment, make Doug's work continually intriguing.

All of his works are exquisitely painted and he often crafts and ornaments unusual frames that serve as extensions of the piece.

In addition to his studio work, Doug is also known for his murals that decorate several buildings in downtown Des Moines including the Kirkwood Hotel, The Police Headquarters and the Skywalk System. Doug has been recognized with several museum shows with his easel work and is included in the collections of The Principal Financial Group, The National Bank of Waterloo, Farm Bureau Insurance Company and the permanent collection of the Des Moines Art Center.

Education:

1968-1972: BFA, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago

1967-1968: American Academy of Art, Chicago

Selected Corporate Collections

The Des Moines Art Center/Des Moines, Iowa
The MacNider Museum/Mason City, Iowa
Pioneer Hi-Bred International/Johnston, Iowa
Farm Bureau Mutual Assurance Company,
West Des Moines, Iowa
The McFarland Clinic/Ames, Iowa
Barrett Law Firm/Des Moines, Iowa
The State of Iowa
Brenton Banks, Inc./Des Moines, Iowa
The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics
AT&T Corporate Headquarters/Kansas City, Missouri
National Bank of Waterloo/Waterloo, Iowa

Selected Commissions

The Equitable of Iowa Building/Des Moines, Iowa
The Meredith Corporation/Des Moines, Iowa
The Des Moines Police Department/Des Moines, Iowa
Silvestri-Balo Showroom/Merchandise Mart, Chicago
Paddlewheel Casino/Las Vegas, Nevada
The Des Moines Ballet, Des Moines, Iowa
Hamden Mall/New Haven, Connecticut
The Kirkwood Civic Center Hotel/Des Moines, Iowa

UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES

U96.184abc

Additional information on *Unlimited Possibilities*, other Art on Campus information sheets, and Art on Campus maps are available at the University Museums office, 290 Scheman Building (2nd Floor) 515/294-3342, or visit us online at <http://www.museums.iastate.edu/>

This information sheet is intended to be used in addition to viewing the Art on Campus. At no time should this sheet be used as a substitute for experiencing the art in person!