

INSIDE ART

By **CAROL VOGEL** FEB. 6, 1998

A Sculpture For Microsoft

In the tradition of the I.B.M. founder Thomas J. Watson Sr., one of the first executives to grasp the image value of putting art on his office walls, the Microsoft Corporation has spent the last 10 years assembling a collection of prints, photographs and drawings that adorn the lobbies, atriums, cafeterias and halls of its 50 buildings.

The collection -- about 2,200 objects so far -- has been chosen by a committee representing a cross-section of employees, from the panel's leader, William Neukom, Microsoft's head of legal and corporate affairs, to technical writers, hardware designers and marketing experts.

Microsoft's chairman, William H. Gates, is not on the committee. Neither is Pablo Schugurensky, the director of Microsoft's art collection, who joined the company about a year ago after serving as director of Art in Public Places at the Washington State Arts Commission.

But Mr. Schugurensky does work closely with the committee. "They are like my board of directors," he said.

In addition to photographs, drawings, prints and paintings by such artists as Lorna Simpson, Judy Pfaff, Carrie Mae Weems and Andres Serrano, Microsoft now has its first outdoor sculpture, at its campus in Redmond, Wash.

"Skip to My Lou," by the post-minimalist sculptor Ursula von Rydingsvard, is a twisting wall of three- to four-foot-high blocks of cedar in the shape of a circle about

60 feet in diameter.

The wood's surface has been treated with graphite to give it a raw, weathered feeling, a look that has become the artist's signature.

Ms. von Rydingsvard, whose work is in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, N.Y., the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, was chosen from among 12 artists.

"When the committee saw her work they liked her vocabulary and the strength of her pieces," Mr. Schugurensky said.

"Skip to My Lou" was commissioned specifically for its site, in the center of a courtyard that makes up a complex of three new buildings on the Microsoft grounds.

Although the committee had long wanted to commission a sculpture there, it was concerned about whether one could be completed and installed in time for the buildings' opening this month.

Mr. Schugurensky said he had found a piece by Ms. von Rydingsvard that the committee considered buying. "But it was not suitable for the outdoors," he said.

Instead, Ms. von Rydingsvard agreed to do the another piece specifically for the site, even though it had to be done in five months, a short time for such a commission.

While Mr. Schugurensky said he hoped Microsoft would commission other new works, its collection encompasses far more than contemporary art.

The company has a group of 17th-century celestial maps and about 200 19th-century Japanese prints, as well as a strong collection of prints by local, Seattle-based artists like Michael Spafford, Jacob Lawrence and Roger Shimomura.

"In the past year we've acquired about 150 objects," Mr. Schugurensky said.

Microsoft's art collection has its own Web site with quarterly on-line exhibitions. "Because our buildings are not open to the public, this is a good way for people outside of Microsoft to view our collection," Mr. Schugurensky said. "And besides the on-line show, they can also view our archives."

Rand Collection for Sale

William Rand, a longtime supporter of the Jewish Museum who has given the institution paintings by Marc Chagall, Ben Shahn and Jules Pascin as well as a sculpture by Elie Nadelman, has now donated the rest of his collection of 19th- and 20th-century art to the museum.

But since much of the work doesn't fall within the institution's mission -- Jewish content or themes and works by Jewish artist -- the museum is selling the collection at Christie's in New York on Feb. 19.

The work is expected to bring \$4 million to \$5 million, and the proceeds will be used to create an endowment to support the museum's education and community programs.

"Mr. Rand is especially interested in education," said Ruth Beesch, the museum's deputy director for programming. "This money will help us develop many programs to serve high school students, the elderly and new immigrants."

For sale is a Picasso portrait of Dora Maar, one of the artist's mistresses, painted in 1939, which is estimated to sell for \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

There are also works on paper, like Jasper Johns's "White Flag" (1960), a lithograph printed in an edition of seven, which Mr. Rand bought from Leo Castelli 12 years ago.

Museum Seeks Director

Ever since John R. Lane left his post as director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art in September, the museum's search committee has been looking for a replacement. One name being bandied around the art world is David A. Ross, director of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

"I've heard the rumors and I'm flattered that my name's in place, but right now I'm focused on what's happening at the Whitney," Mr. Ross said.

Another name that has been mentioned as a serious contender is that of Neal Benezra, the assistant director of art and public programs at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington. Mr. Benezra declined to comment.

Officials at the San Francisco museum say the rumors are premature. "We are not aware of who the candidates are," said Jay Finney, a museum spokesman. "It could be another one or two months or more."

"It is still in the search process," said David Resnicow, a partner in Resnicow Schroeder, the cultural planning and marketing firm that is hunting for the new director.

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